

1993

African American Students' Perception of Mandatory Participation in a Remedial Program at an Historically Black University in the South.

Deborah Burson Smith

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**African American students' perception of mandatory
participation in a remedial program at an historically black
university in the South**

Smith, Deborah Burson, Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF
MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN A REMEDIAL PROGRAM
AT AN HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY IN
THE SOUTH

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by
Deborah Burson Smith
B.A. LeMoyne-Owen College, 1970
M.Ed. University of New Orleans, 1980
December, 1993

Dedicated to
my mother, Jimmie L. Burson
and for Eddie, Jr., Kasia, Kimberly and Eddie III

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who helped me write this final document.

I extend a very special thanks to Dr. William Pinar, Dr. Louis Castenell, Dr. Williams Doll and Dr. Petra Munroe for their guidance and concern. I thank other members of my doctoral committee for their encouragement and support: Dr. Thomas Durant, Dr. Kofi Lomotey, Dr. Cameron McCarthy and Dr. Leslie Roman.

I am truly grateful for the support I have received from the administration of Southern University at New Orleans in affording me the opportunity to pursue my studies, especially Chancellor Robert B. Gex, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Melinda Bartley and Dean Matthew Proctor.

I owe a very special thanks to the participants in this study for opening up their hearts, ideas and classrooms to me. It was only through their dedication, courage and absolute candor that I was able to realize the fulfillment of a dream.

I extend thanks to Brenda Jackson and Scheherazade Brown Jackson for providing technical assistance in the early stages of this project, and I extend special gratitude to Arthur Robertson for his "special" technical favors. I am indeed grateful to Carole Townsel and JoeAnn Anderson for their expertise and patience in preparing this final document.

I owe sincere gratitude to several friends for their support and acts of kindness. I can't thank my special classmate and friend--Neari Francois Warner--enough, for sharing the ride, and most importantly, for taking time to give me solid criticism and sincere support when "rough times" delayed the completion of this project. I am grateful to Deborah Cains for her friendship and support during my writer's block and valuable comments about the research project. I am indebted to Glenwood and Margaret Dobbins for their impromptu dinner invitations which gave me additional time to focus on my research. I also thank the members of my church for their prayers and concern, especially Arthur Robertson, who never stopped praying.

With special love, I acknowledge my sisters and brothers, Thirkel, Deatra, Marlan, Karlyn, Grady III, Arlen, Courtney, and Torrence for their support and encouragement.

I extend a very special thanks to my mother, Jimmie Lois Burson. She encouraged me to write and to continue to write when I wanted to quit. Without her love and support, this final document would have been an impossible task. And, for the same reasons, I owe special thanks to my husband, Eddie Smith, Jr. and my children, Kasia, Kimberly and Eddie III. They allowed me to be "half" absent and "half" present in their lives while I sat in front of the computer for months. I truly love each of you.

Finally, I must acknowledge my loved ones who are not physically here to enjoy this moment, but their love, enthusiasm and words of encouragement during the early stages of this endeavor guided and sustained me during the completion of this final document. They are: my father, the late Grady Burson, Jr.; my grandmother, the late Bertha Buckles; my uncle, the late Percy Buckles; and my dearest friend, the late

Barbara Partee Nelms. I will hold them forever in my heart.

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ABSTRACT

Academically underprepared college bound students and remedial instruction at the collegiate level continue to be serious and recurring problems for postsecondary institutions throughout the United States. Although many institutions have attempted to address the academic needs of underprepared students by providing mandatory programs with varied approaches in reading, writing, and mathematics, educators, theorists, and scholars have given little attention to the effects of mandatory participation on students' perceptions of a remedial program or classroom. This research is designed to provide an inside view of the remedial classroom and underprepared African American students' interpretations of certain practices that may impact their potential for educational success.

In this research, I examine the perceptions of ten students in an effort (1) to provide data that contribute to effective practices for remedial or academic support programs designed to enhance the basic skills of underprepared African American students who need transitional development in a postsecondary setting and (2) to offer recommendations

of strategies, programs and proposals that will enhance prematriculation efforts and the academic preparation of African American students who seek higher education.

I begin this research by providing an historical overview of remediation with attention being given to how institutions of higher education have never enjoyed an entering population of students adequately prepared for the demands of college level work. I focus a literature review on the persisting problems of underpreparedness and the varying remedial approaches designed to address this issue at the collegiate level.

Through the voices of ten students, I attempt to provide an insider's view of the remedial classroom. I use their voices to document varied perceptions of current remedial practices at a postsecondary institution. I draw conclusions as to the impact of mandatory participation and students' perceived value of their participation which ultimately affects their persistence at the university.

Finally, I recommend appropriate strategies and programs to facilitate and enhance the academic

preparation of African Americans who continue to
report to colleges and universities as underprepared
students.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The issue of underprepared¹ college-bound students is a serious problem for postsecondary institutions. More and more students are entering collegiate programs without the basic skills necessary to meet the demands of college-level work. For example, 20 to 35% of the entering freshman are functional illiterates who read at or below the fourth grade level (Ahrendt, 1987; Cohen & Brawer, 1981; Cohen, 1987; Roueche & Armes, 1983; 1980). Even more distressing is the fact that less than 5% of this country's 17-year olds can demonstrate the ability to learn and synthesize from specialized reading materials (O'Neil, 1991).

Similarly, according to the Board of Regents in Louisiana, at least half of the freshmen (50.4%) in public colleges took at least one remedial course in reading, writing and math during the 1991 fall semester. The regional statistics indicate that the problem of underpreparedness is worse in Louisiana than in most other Southern states ("Half La.," 1992). On a national level, achievement test scores on the

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), "which Americans often hold to be the single barometer of educational quality," (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 10) continue to be very discouraging. Scholastic Aptitude Test averages fell to record lows in 1991 with the College Board reporting the worst decline on the verbal section since 1969 and a similar decline in math averages for the first time in 11 years, despite efforts among urban school educators to reverse this trend ("SAT Verbal," 1991), for instance:

a blizzard of education reform proposals has fallen, and states have raised the graduation standards for high schools, installed minimum standards for moving from one grade to the next, required new teachers to pass special examinations before being allowed to teach, instituted choice and magnet school programs, and so on. But so far, there has been no change in high school graduation rates, in most test scores, or in other indicators of 'quality.' (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 10)

In sum, as emphasis is being placed on raising standards and improving quality while simultaneously maintaining access to higher education, the alarming percentage of college-bound students who may require remedial education is quite evident.

In response to the lack of preparedness of many entering students in postsecondary education, most colleges and universities have already developed

special programs and/or courses to provide academic support for underprepared students when they enroll (Cross, 1976; Enright, 1988; Roueche & Snow, 1979). These special programs/courses have become the "umbrella under which community colleges, colleges, and universities have placed a wide variety of courses, seminars, and workshops--credit or noncredit--designed to assist students' development of entry skills in reading, writing, math, speaking, listening, notetaking and studying" (Gruenberg, 1983, p. 2). In fact, it has become uncommon to find a university or college in the United States without some kind of compensatory or basic skills program for underprepared college-bound students (Hawkins, 1981; Newton, 1982).

Collegiate remedial courses and other academic support services have been "some of the fastest growing programs in higher education" over the past two decades (Abraham, 1987a, p. 10). For example, Davis (1975) reported that in 1971 less than 50% of postsecondary institutions offered any kind of remedial courses for underprepared freshmen. By 1977, Roueche and Snow (1979), however, reported that 78% of four-year colleges and 93% of two-year college were

providing some forms of remedial instruction. Also, according to a 1983-84 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1985), the data revealed that 94% of public institutions and 82% of all institutions offered at least one remedial course. Similarly, Mansfield (1991) indicated that 91% of public colleges/universities, 90% of 2-year colleges, 64% of 4-year postsecondary institutions, and 58% of private colleges offered at least one remedial course.

Although the number of collegiate remedial programs has increased since the 1970s, a review of the history of remediation in postsecondary institution indicates that "the inadequate preparation of college-bound students is a recurring problem, rather than one of recent origins" (Wright & Cahalan, 1985, p. 4). Preparatory programs were provided by the universities as early as 1894 when over 40% of entering freshmen in American colleges required some form of preparatory instruction (Levine, 1978). Although the programs were considered pre-college, it was not uncommon in these instances for college credit to be given (Abraham, 1987b; Wright & Cahalan, 1985).

While entrance requirements were raised throughout the 19th century, Brier (1984), Enright and Kerstiens (1980) reported that the pressure to maintain full classrooms often forced colleges to accept students lacking the necessary requirements. For instance, in 1907 more than half the students entering selective institutions, such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Princeton were unable to satisfy the formal entrance requirements (Wright & Cahalan, 1985). After 1920, two-year institutions were encouraged to provide postsecondary preparation and remediation for underprepared high school graduates. This practice continued until the early 1960s. It was about this time that reports in the press and research indicated that almost two-thirds of all college freshmen were deficient in reading skills deemed necessary for postsecondary education (Abraham, 1987a).

In addition, "the educational climate demanded that all of public higher education be accessible to students regardless of race or sex" (1987a, p. 12). The outcome of these conditions was that many underprepared students were channeled into traditional four-year colleges and universities. These actions

triggered numerous reactions which included declining admission scores, faculty resistance to teaching assignments in remedial programs, administrative discussions regarding institutional missions, public sentiments of where remedial programs belong, and the exorbitant cost required to provide comprehensive remediation at the postsecondary level (Abraham, 1987b).

Several explanations have been proposed to account for the increase in remedial programs during the 1960s and 1970s. One often cited is the increase in the percentage of the population enrolled in colleges and universities. In 1960 about 18% of the nation's 20 to 24 year-old population was enrolled in postsecondary institutions; by 1970, 26%; by 1984, 36% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1971, p. 13; 1985, p. 9). Also, during the same time period, the percentage of high school graduates entering colleges or universities changed very little. In 1972, 45% of high school graduates attended a college or university a year after graduation; 46% did likewise in 1980 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1985).

Other factors often identified to explain the increase in remedial programs include:

a reduction in required high school courses; social promotion; grade inflation; increased absenteeism; watered-down curricula; less homework; fewer quality teachers; lower college admission standards; availability of remedial coursework at the postsecondary level; overuse of television watching; changing family structures; and declining student motivation. (Wirtz, et al., 1977)

With these phenomena occurring almost simultaneously in the late 1970s, the number of underprepared college students increased, and remedial programs and other support activities were undertaken in earnest as colleges and universities sought to address the needs of underprepared students (Cross, 1976; Southern Regional Education Board, 1983). In fact, institutions of higher education proceeded as follows:

Colleges and universities experimented with everything from open admissions to summer enrichment programs for educationally disadvantaged elementary and secondary students. The slogan for . . . teaching in these experimental outreach programs was: Every student is capable of learning. (Kolodny, 1991, p. A44)

The proliferation of remedial programs at postsecondary institutions has not been without controversy and uncertainties. First, there are those who contend that remedial education has no place in postsecondary institutions (Wright & Cahalan, 1985). These opponents argue:

that institutions of higher education should not be duplicating the work of the secondary schools--students should not be admitted into college if they cannot do college work. (Southern Regional Education Board, 1983, p. 5)

Contrary to this position, there are others who insist that everyone should be afforded an equal opportunity to benefit from postsecondary education and that certain individuals should not be excluded if secondary schools have not prepared them with the requisite skills necessary to satisfy minimal admissions standards (Southern Regional Education Board, 1983). These proponents argue that remedial programs provide underprepared students with a second chance at academic preparation. "In fact, remedial programs are the key to the success of the entire 'second chance' idea. . . . By removing deficiencies, a student can feasibly pursue a program of interest" (Roueche, 1968, p. 22). Consequently, remedial programs are necessary to bridge the gap between underprepared students and successful postsecondary work.

Despite the second chance concept and the intent of postsecondary remedial programs, some critics question the efficacy of remedial programs. These critics maintain that it is impossible for a one-or

two-semester program to compensate for 12 years of underpreparation in inferior schools while at the same time pursuing baccalaureate studies (Clark, 1979; Newton, 1982). Moreover, they contend that remedial programs simply keep underprepared students in college/universities without contributing to academic progress or career development since the "content and skills are a part of the curriculum in elementary and secondary educational programs throughout the United States" (Newton, 1982, p. 46).

Although these critics may perceive the remedial programs as being of dubious value, Roueche, (1968) has indicated that students' participation in these programs may generate results which are not readily discernible by observers, for instance:

Observers often are more pessimistic about the efficacy of the programs than are the participants, probably because the participants are doing something, see results that the observers are unable to see, look forward to a solution or solutions that may be as unexpected and as far-reaching as some of the discoveries made by scientists. Not all discoveries flow from hypotheses or designs. (Roueche, 1968, p. VI)

It is precisely with this observation in mind that I plan to research and analyze selected African American students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a

remedial program at an historically Black university in the South. Mandatory participation is defined as those experiences associated with remediation in which students are required to participate, as determined by institutional evaluations.

My experiences as an African American educator and as a former director of a remedial program at an historically African American university provide the impetus for this research project.

A preliminary review of the literature on remedial endeavors at postsecondary institutions indicates that the labels assigned to programs for underprepared students vary from institution to institution. The terms "developmental" and "remedial" are found most often and used interchangeably. Contrary to this popular belief, however, the terms connote different meanings. "Developmental refers to the development of skills or attitudes and may or may not have anything to do with making a student eligible for another program" (Roueche, 1968, p. VIII). Remedial suggests the "remediation of student deficiencies in order that the student might enter a program for which he was previously ineligible" (1968, p. VIII). For this study, the term "remedial" will be

used to refer to any program which provides academic support for students who need to strengthen their educational preparation in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to study students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program as students and teachers interact and make sense of the remedial environment. In this study I will also examine the expectations of teachers, classroom requirements, and pedagogical skills that enable African American students to attain the knowledge and skills they will need to prosper.

The study will provide an inside view of one remedial classroom for one semester, which will go beyond phenomenological descriptions, to explain and describe the perceptions of the students and instructors in the remedial classroom as juxtaposed to how students perceive these interactions and their involvements. The research methods for this case study will include (1) open-ended and focused interview sessions with students and instructors, (2) ethnographic participant observations, and (3) review

of pertinent documents, such as annual reports, course syllabi and students' work.

The findings from this study will be used to formulate recommendations for institutions with similar student populations attempting to address the issues of literacy, pre-college preparation, remediation, and academic support as related to African American students and other minorities. This research may also contribute to the development of a restructured mode which will effectively address the literacy needs of academically underprepared students.

Need for the Study

If opportunity is defined as the degree of equality or openness of access to treasured things, such as education, then a balance of opportunity should and must become one of the underlying functions of education (Scimecca, 1980). Common sense suggests that the types of courses taken in high school greatly influence performance on placement tests, college admissions, and the degree of success in college. Choosing or being advised into the appropriate courses is critical because those youngsters who are most likely to be prepared for college-level courses are those who have completed a rigorous academic program

of study (Southern Regional Education Board, 1989).

Completing college preparatory courses alone, however, will not automatically result in readiness for college and less remediation at the postsecondary level, for:

unless the courses taken develop high order competencies in reading, writing, speaking, mathematical and scientific reasoning, and good study skills, too many students entering college will continue to be unprepared for college level courses. (Creech, 1990, p. 19)

The fact that schools tend to reflect the social backgrounds of their students and their likely future economic position in society is documented throughout the literature (Apple, 1979; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Burgess, 1985; McNeil, 1986; Ogbu, 1978; Rist, 1970; Sarason, 1983; Scimecca, 1980;Sizer, 1984; Wilson, 1975; Yates, 1978). Moreover, students are sometimes placed into various groups or programs according to dress, language, behavior and test performance (Burgess, 1985). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in general, and minorities in particular, are frequently placed in the lower groups, while middle and upper class Anglo Americans are frequently placed in the upper groups. According to Oakes (1985) and Hanson (1964), poor and minority students have been found in disproportionately large percentages in

the lower tracks (special education, vocational, or remedial programs) which tend to severely limit and channel the activities of the students. They tend to graduate with high school diplomas that often reflect (1) their adeptness in obeying the necessary rules, and (2) conformable behavior, not academic excellence (Anyon, 1980; Oakes, 1985). However, because of positive reinforcement for non-academic performance, students may view themselves as being adequately prepared for college and capable of fulfilling the necessary academic requirements (Guinta, Bonifacio & McVey, 1988). Many may not realize that such grades are not actually indicators of academic ability nor are they realistic predictors for college success, as indicated:

For example, students' false assessment of academic ability may have resulted from receiving high or passing grades for good attendance and good behavior, rather than for academic achievement. Further, the student may have developed a false sense of academic superiority by virtue of having been in class with peers whose academic abilities were even lower. (Guinta, Bonifacio, & McVey, 1987, p. 21)

For instance, in a study conducted by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1974), African Americans and other minorities were disproportionately represented in classes for the "mentally subnormal" in

the Chicago public schools. More than 80% of the students identified as mentally retarded or with learning disabilities were African Americans, Puerto Ricans, or Mexican Americans. In a similar study conducted by the Children's Defense Fund which involved 505 school districts in Georgia, Arkansas, Southern Carolina, and Mississippi (1974), over 80% of the African American students were enrolled in educable mentally retarded classes. The percentage is significant here because the total African American school population in these school districts was less than 40%. And, on a local level, the New Orleans Public School System initiated a study on the status of African American male students with the Committee to Study the Status of the Black Male in New Orleans Public Schools (1988). The data revealed that over 20% of Anglo American students were enrolled in the gifted program as compared to an enrollment of only 2% for African American students participating in the same program systemwide.

Although a large quantity of data has been produced regarding the achievement gap between African Americans and other minority groups on standardized tests, less has been produced on the possible role of

the school and teachers in the execution and forwarding of such differences. It is a fact that the high schools play a unique part in political socialization by assigning individuals to different positions in the labor force through the use of labeling or a differentiated curriculum (Oakes, 1985; Rist, 1970; Sarason, 1983). Consequently, the high school, through its differentiated curriculum, plays a crucial role in both legitimating structural inequality in the social system and perpetuating the disproportionate underattainment of the poor and minorities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; McNeil, 1986).

Reducing disparities in educational attainment among African Americans and other minorities is a must if we are to compete successfully in economic development as a nation, for:

Our society has just about written off those 40% of the disadvantaged who are high-school dropouts, a disproportionate number of whom are black and Hispanic. Yet, the disadvantaged are over a third of our school population today, on their way to becoming a majority early in the next century. . . . Once the disadvantaged become a majority of our school population, unless we find ways to educate them, the current 40% dropout rate will become our new functional illiteracy rate. (Harris, 1991, p. 83)

Currently, approximately 30% (12 million) of the students enrolled in public school are minorities

(Education that Works, 1990). And, based upon Hodgkinson's (1986) demographics, higher education will have to be prepared during the next decades to address the needs of these students and an entering population that will be both smaller and significantly different from the one traditionally served. In fact, eligible college freshmen in the next decade will be primarily poor, non-white (Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians), emotionally and/or physically handicapped, and limited in their use of the English language (Hodgkinson, 1986).

In view of the projected demographics, the American educational systems--elementary school, middle school, high school, and college or professional school--must begin to focus on the needs and perspectives of African Americans and other minorities. Many of these schools, however, continue to operate with outdated curricula and structures based on the notion that a small elite will need to have academic success. Hence, alternative strategies are absolutely essential, if we are to improve educational options for minorities.

Faced with increasingly large proportions of underprepared minority students, the higher

educational community can no longer afford to stand aloof from the problems affecting the elementary and secondary educational school systems, for:

Historically, the posture of higher education has been to reject and ignore the less promising young people by selecting out the more promising and concentrating its resources on them. . . . The immediate function of higher education is to serve qualified persons. But its larger function is to help increase the number who can become qualified. (Bowen, 1982, p. 145)

Minority students' persistence and graduation should be primary concerns for postsecondary institutions. During the early college years, African American students seek self-awareness as related to: (1) who they are; (2) what to believe in; and (3) what to value (Abatso, 1982). Many experience invisible barriers which determine whether they will persist to graduation, fail academically, drop out, or simply transfer to other institutions with similar obstacles (Abatso, 1982).

A survey of pertinent literature reveals that research on the national, state, and local levels has primarily investigated the extensiveness and need for remediation, the number and type of remedial courses offered, and remedial program outcomes (e.g., student retention and course completion). However, there is a

paucity of ethnographic research on African American students' perceptions of remedial programs. Such research is imperative to create sound bases for the improvement of educational practices and policies affecting African Americans and other minorities participating in a remedial program (Thompson, 1984; Wright, 1979). Traditionally, research in education has focused on quantitative data with emphasis on grade point averages, test scores, and retention figures. Although quantitative emphasis is important, it does not adequately assess all areas of improvement which are perceived as outcomes of remedial/compensatory programs in postsecondary education (Silverman, 1983). For example, graduation with an associate or baccalaureate degree is by no means the only possible positive outcome of postsecondary enrollment. Many students may enter college with a personal goal other than graduation. This goal may include enrolling in and successfully completing one or two courses, an academic semester, or one or two years.

The value of collegiate remedial programs is not completely measured or reflected when college graduation is the only standard used to evaluate

success. Many of these programs have goals for affective development which may include maintaining motivation for college study, encouraging goal-directed behavior, or building academic and personal self-esteem (Silverman, 1983). Appropriate measures, then, should embrace such factors as the acquisition of measured skills in academic areas (reading, writing and mathematics), the completion of entry-level requirements for a particular occupation, the successful completion of requirements for maintaining a work position or for attaining a promotion, or the completion of a personal goal. The assessment of these program goals is best accomplished through qualitative research, since:

Qualitative research is the approach for investigating all those areas of development which we really feel have profited from special efforts but are not quantifiable through formalized testing or retention studies. (Silverman, 1983, pp. 16-17)

Conducting appropriate research in order to determine the effectiveness of any collegiate remedial program is absolutely essential. With the projected influx of minorities into postsecondary institutions during the next decades and the projected illiteracy

rate, it is imperative that educators and theorists begin to research and analyze the effects of mandatory participation on students' perceptions of a remedial program at a postsecondary institution, for:

The question of whether participation in a developmental [remedial] program should be mandatory or voluntary for underprepared students has often been raised by practitioners in the field. . . . The evidence is not sufficient to state . . . with certainty. It does, however, appear to be an issue worthy of further research." (Boylan, 1983, p. 39).

Because of this void in research and the projected influx of underprepared African Americans and other minorities into postsecondary institutions, I have African American students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program as the focus of my study. This study will serve as research which may contribute to effective practices for remedial or academic support programs designed to enhance the basic skills of underprepared minority students who need transitional development.

Significance of Research

The problems of underpreparedness remain extremely widespread throughout American higher education. The crises in our schools are exacerbated by the projected demographic shifts which will impact

the American educational systems and cause a sense of urgency to improve and adjust the way educators and mainstream theorists respond to students. Although a great deal of research has been focused on long term retention of students and the immediate gains of students who participate in collegiate remedial programs, little is known about the possible effects of participation in a remedial program from a student's perspective (Boylan, 1983).

There are few models of effective teaching-learning practices for underprepared college entrants and/or minorities and even fewer models that focus on African American students' perceptions of their schooling experiences. The dearth of such research and the underrepresentation of minorities clearly indicate a need for African Americans to ground their schooling experiences into critical discourse (McCarthy, 1988; 1990). If we can develop a perspective and/or model to explain the manner in which certain collegiate remedial practices impact African Americans and their desire to gain knowledge, then significant progress might be made in efforts to address the issue of underprepared minorities in postsecondary institutions. This is the goal toward

which this proposal for case study research is directed as indicated by the following research questions:

1. How do students perceive mandatory participation in a remedial program at an historically Black university?
2. What are the characteristics of a remedial program at an historically Black university in the South? How do students view the remedial classroom environment?
3. What motivates an instructor to seek employment as a remedial teacher in a collegiate setting at an historically Black university? What are their expectations? How do they (expectations) impact students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program?
4. Who are the remedial students? What do they seek to gain as members of a remedial class/program?

The remedial reading program at an historically Black university has been selected to address these issues as related to this research. There is a tacit assumption that reading provides a vehicle for access, success and/or survival, at least in a minimal way in today's society. Although this study will be

situated in a remedial reading classroom, it is not my intent to analyze the reading program.

Organization of the Study

In this introductory chapter, I have sought to provide the theoretical framework which emphasizes the need for this research. I have also sought to establish the purpose of this research as follows: (1) to study students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program in order to provide data that contribute to effective practices for remedial or academic support programs designed to enhance the basic skills of underprepared minority students who need transitional development in a postsecondary setting and (2) to offer recommendations of strategies, programs and proposals that will enhance prematriculation efforts and the academic preparation of African American students who seek higher education.

Chapter 2 provides an historical background of remedial efforts at postsecondary institutions with special attention being given to how institutions of higher education have never enjoyed an entering population of students adequately prepared for the demands of college-level work. I focus a literature

review on the persisting problems of underpreparedness and the varying remedial approaches designed to address this issue at the collegiate level.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and philosophical basis for selecting case study research. In addition to providing my personal assessment of case study research, I use Chapter 3 to describe the methodology and to delineate the activities involved in the research project.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings and conclusions of this study. I examine the structure of the remedial program and the classroom experiences of research participants. Verbatim quotes from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations are used throughout this chapter to identify pertinent issues related to collegiate remedial programs as raised through the literature.

Chapter 5 provides recommendations for remedial programs. I use this chapter to suggest appropriate strategies and programs to facilitate and enhance the academic preparation of minorities for college.

Endnote to Chapter 1

¹Underprepared is used to indicate an absence of requisite skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The term does not connote a deficit inherent in the students but emphasizes the shortcomings of the curriculum which influences the educational attainment of youngsters in urban school districts. Given this definition of underprepared, perhaps, disenfranchised may be a word deemed as a more appropriate term.

CHAPTER 2

ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

In this chapter, I will examine the historical background of remedial education at postsecondary institutions. Examining the persisting problems of underpreparedness, I move this chapter from the efforts of the early 1800s to the current remedial approaches designed to address the demands for adequate preparation imposed on high school students by postsecondary institutions as gleaned from the literature. I document how inadequate preparation of college-bound students is a persisting and recurring problem.

Historical Background

The decade of the 1990s marks over 100 years of higher education's efforts to provide appropriate remedial instruction for underprepared college students (Maxwell, 1979; Meyers, 1984), for:

Remedial education has been an enduring, integral part of higher education, as has the concern about the place of remediation in college-level education. That concern has led to a long-standing debate which encompasses issues of equity--provide adequate preparation for a diverse student population--and issues of quality--ensuring high standards at colleges and universities. (Mansfield, 1991, p. 11)

Many people erroneously believe, however, that the need for remedial education began as a response to the social climate or the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. To the contrary, colleges and universities in America operated remedial programs for underprepared students as early as the 1800s (Abraham, 1991; Brier, 1984; Mansfield, 1991). During this period the postsecondary institutions were primarily self-sustaining operations which were funded through student tuition, private donations, and student fees. Therefore, the student's ability to pay his/her own way was a major criterion for admission to college. "If you could pay the price of admission, you were automatically 'college material'" (Boylan, 1988, p. 2). In principle, this meant that any individual who had the money to attend a postsecondary institution was generally able to do so. (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976); consequently, many "American colleges and universities admitted students considered by faculty and administrators to be far below acceptable 'college level' standards" (Brier, 1984, p. 2).

As a result, the postsecondary institutions of the 1800s were confronted with substantial numbers of academically underprepared students. In response to

the needs of these students, colleges and universities provided individual tutoring sessions. As enrollments increased, however, the number of tutors became inadequate to satisfy the demand for appropriate academic support, for instance:

At many institutions preparatory enrollments matched or exceeded the 'regular' college enrollments. If accurately represented, many of these institutions were preparatory schools with college departments rather than colleges with preparatory departments. (Brier, 1984, p. 3)

In sum, many postsecondary institutions had more individuals involved in giving and receiving tutoring/remedial services than those involved in regular college level work (Boylan & White, 1987; Brier, 1984). This problem became so severe at the University of Wisconsin that the institution established the first collegiate preparatory department in 1849. This department provided remedial courses in reading, writing, and mathematics for students who were academically unprepared to do college level work. In addition, the collegiate preparatory department model was soon adopted by other postsecondary institutions throughout the United States because:

The absence of a national system of high schools, and the uncontrolled creation of public and private colleges and universities, created the need for what we now call 'remedial education' in the form of a preparatory department in almost every college in the country. (Trow, 1983, p. 20)

In fact, by 1889, 80% of colleges and universities in this country had instituted similar collegiate preparatory programs (Abraham, 1991; Boylan & White, 1987; Boylan, 1988; Brier, 1984).

This increase in the number of collegiate preparatory programs was also stimulated by both the expansion of higher education in the United States and the corresponding increase in the number of underprepared students. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 or the Land Grant Acts provided the impetus for this growth (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976). These acts were devised to increase the number of trained engineers, agricultural, military, and business specialists and to encourage access to higher education for a vast variety of the citizenry in general and the less affluent in particular (Boylan & White, 1987; Cohen, 1987). Consequently, many postsecondary institutions opened their doors to growing numbers of underprepared students, who were unfamiliar with academe (Brier, 1984; Jones & Richards-Smith, 1987).

During the latter part of the 19th century, there was an unprecedented period of growth in the number and variety of postsecondary institutions. Indeed, colleges for African Americans and for women, agricultural and technical institutes, coeducational institutions, professional and graduate schools, and state colleges were also increased (Brier, 1984; Brubacher & Rudy, 1976). With this growth in postsecondary institutions and a similar increase in underprepared students, many college reformers such as Noah Porter, William Rainey Harper, Charles William Eliot, and Andrew Dickson White petitioned for the admission of students who were adequately prepared for college level work (Brier, 1984). James H. Canfield, for example, reported to the National Council of Education meeting in Nashville, Tennessee in 1889 "that of the nearly four hundred institutions of higher education in the United States, only sixty-five 'have freed themselves from the embarrassment of preparatory departments'" (1984, p. 3).

The concern for the number of collegiate preparatory programs and the disparity among institutions in their admissions practices prompted the establishment of the College Entrance Examination

Board in 1890 as a means of standardizing admissions standards, raising academic standards, and eliminating the need for collegiate preparatory programs (Boylan, 1988; Feuss, 1950). This board, however, failed to accomplish these objectives, for the U.S. Commissioner of Education reported in 1913 that 80% of the postsecondary institutions in the country still offered some form of collegiate preparatory programs (Maxwell, 1979).

By the 1920s and 1930s, however, the junior college movement was underway, and the junior colleges provided an alternative to the collegiate preparatory programs by offering both remedial or preparatory courses and the equivalent of the first two years of college courses. At the same time, postsecondary institutions were becoming more financially stable, and the College Entrance Examination Board was beginning to have an impact on college admissions standards (Abraham, 1991; Boylan, 1988).

Consequently, postsecondary institutions began reducing their commitment to preparatory programs as underprepared students were either being screened out through the admissions process or attending junior colleges (Boylan, 1988).

By 1940, the college preparatory program had been primarily replaced as a fixture in postsecondary institutions by junior colleges and college divisions within the colleges/universities. Nonetheless, remedial education was still taking place under different names and in different locations under the auspices of college reading programs. In fact, according to a study conducted by Enright and Kerstiens (1980), between 30 and 60% of the colleges and universities polled in 1942 offered or planned to offer remedial reading and study skills programs.

This continuation of remedial studies in higher education was further stimulated by the Veteran's Adjustment Act of 1944, which provided government support for World War II veterans to attend college. Although postsecondary institutions had become more selective by the mid-20th century, most admissions officers opted to admit veterans and give them the opportunity rather than deny them admission. With the influx of the ex-servicemen to postsecondary institutions and the usual numbers of underprepared students, as many as two-thirds of all college freshmen in the 1950s were deficient in reading skills necessary for academic success (Maxwell, 1979).

In order to address the academic needs of the veterans and other underprepared students, most postsecondary institutions provided a variety of reading and study skills courses along with individual tutoring sessions through reading departments or college counseling centers (Boylan, 1988). These courses, which were generally offered on a non-credit basis, were often required or strongly recommended for students with poor high school records, poor entrance test scores, or poor grade point averages during their initial terms at a college/university (Kulik, Kulik & Schwalb, 1983).

By the early 1960s, children of the post World War II "baby boom" generation were of college age, and many of them began seeking admission to higher education (Boylan, 1988). These students increased the ranks of college applicants tremendously. It was during this time that postsecondary institutions were afforded the first opportunity to be extremely selective in their admissions practices, for they had a large number of qualified applicants to replace students lost through attrition (Boylan, 1988; Eurich, 1963; Preer, 1983; Southern Regional Education Board, 1983). Thus, four-year institutions reduced their

remedial services while community and junior colleges, which almost doubled, increased their efforts to provide remedial services (Boylan, 1988; Southern Regional Education Board, 1983).

Beginning in the late 1960s and 1970s, however, the extreme selectivity of the early 1960s gave way to the philosophy of open admissions. The Civil Rights movement opened the door to increased numbers of the indigent, the disabled and the handicapped, minorities, women, and the nontraditional through informal partnerships established between the federal government and postsecondary institutions (Abraham, 1991). The federal government provided ample funds for special services, financial aid, and minority recruitment programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965. In return, postsecondary institutions provided access and instruction to advance those individuals who had been previously underrepresented in higher education (Boylan, 1988), for example:

These 'total push' programs provided individual tutoring, guidance, learning centers, study skills courses, and other services. Some of the programs provided support to youngsters who were still in high school; other programs provided support only after high-risk students were admitted to college. (Kulik, Kulik & Schwalb, 1983, p. 398)

The national commitment to access and excellence through special program funding and financial aid added large numbers of underprepared nontraditional students to the growing number of underprepared traditional college applicants (Cross, 1976).

Response to this challenge harked back to the old preparatory school concept--this time with a twist. The new programs were now using aliases, such as fundamental, remedial, special, foundation, equal opportunity, compensatory, or developmental studies. (Abraham, 1991, p. 4)

Whatever the new programs were called, they all had the same objective--to help underprepared students make a successful adjustment to higher education. By 1977, nearly 80% of all postsecondary institutions in the United States were back to providing some form of remedial instruction (English, basic mathematics, reading and study skills) to assist underprepared students (Roueche & Snow, 1979). These remedial courses were usually full-term, credit courses, taught by a team of faculty members and counselors (Kulik, Kulik & Schwalb, 1983).

The decade of the 1980s, however, brought a climate which deemphasized educational opportunity and called for better high school preparation and higher college entrance standards. In fact, the benchmark

report, A Nation At Risk (1983), conveyed recommendations that were specifically applicable to remedial education:

Providing a solid foundation of English, math, science, and social studies in high school; Planned rather than haphazard teaching of study skills; More rigorous academic curricula with higher standards for student performance; and Raising entry requirements for all institutions of higher education. (Abraham, 1991, p. 4)

In spite of these recommendations, the National Center for Education Statistics (1985) reported that still nearly 80% of the colleges and universities in this country offered remedial programs for underprepared students (Mansfield, 1991; Roueche & Snow, 1979; Wright & Calahan, 1985). It should be noted here that the percentage of remedial programs offered during this period is the same as those offering similar programs in 1889. The fact that a significant number of students enter postsecondary institutions underprepared for success in college-level work is not a new occurrence; instead, it clearly represents a situation that has endured since the earliest days of postsecondary education in the United States. Collegiate remedial programs and/or services are not new. They are merely updated

responses to a continuing problem (Boylan, 1988; U.S. Department of Education, 1985), for:

Academically underprepared students have not disappeared from American higher education; neither have contingent educational programs and the traditional controversy surrounding the presence of these students and programs designed to serve them. Although the particulars have changed, the substance remains the same. Underprepared students have been and continue to be an integral part of American higher education. (Brier, 1984, p. 5)

In sum, history indicates that underpreparedness and remedial instruction at the collegiate level have been and continue to be serious and persisting problems for postsecondary institutions throughout the United States.

As suggested earlier, many institutions have attempted to address the needs of underprepared students through differing remedial approaches. In the next section, I provide a selected review of general characteristics of current remedial programs specifically designed for students who fail to satisfy entry level requirements for higher education. The characteristics selected for review here include program objectives, credit and grades, modes of instruction, duration and timing, and testing and placement.

Selected Characteristics of Remedial Programs

Remedial programs at the collegiate level exhibit tremendous variance in philosophical orientations and organizational patterns (Skinner & Carter, 1987). To a great extent, the program diversity is a natural reflection of the variations in purposes, structure, and clientele of higher education throughout the United States (Newton, 1982).

According to Bers (1987), the term programs is used:

rather loosely, since some remedial programs are truly programs in the broadest sense, comprising an administrative structure, sequenced curriculum, identified faculty, designated support services--even special residence facilities. Other programs exist in name only, and consist simply of a small number of unrelated courses or services available to any students electing to use them. (1987, p. 3)

In addition, Roueche and Snow (1979) and Wright and Cahalan (1985) suggest that remedial programs exhibit a continuum ranging from a division or department of remedial education with designated faculty, support services, and budget to isolated remedial courses attached to other existing disciplines throughout the institutions. For example, in a study conducted by Wright & Cahalan (1985), 33% of the 511 colleges and universities surveyed indicated that they had separate divisions or departments devoted to remedial

education. Similarly, Mansfield (1991) indicated that 26% of the 2,874 colleges and universities involved in a fast response survey reported having separate remedial departments or divisions. In fact, academic departments were identified as the most frequent providers of remedial education with 69% providing remedial math, 65% providing remedial writing, and 51 percent providing remedial reading.

Grant and Hoeber (1978), Cross (1976), and Gruenberg (1983) identified reading, mathematics, English, science, ethnic studies, self-development, study skills, and career development as the common content areas of remedial programs. Although there are some similarities among course offerings, remedial programs differ among several key components, such as program objectives, policies regarding grades and credit, modes of instruction, timing and duration of remedial courses, and policies relating to testing and placement (Bers, 1987).

Multiple or even conflicting program objectives may certainly exist among or within the same remedial programs. Since these objectives are not always specific, constituencies may often infer diverse

objectives that support their own needs and values,
for instance:

to assist students to achieve a predetermined skill level, to enable students to transfer into and succeed in a regular curriculum, and to attract and retain students at the institution regardless of the likelihood they will complete a degree. (Bers, 1987, p. 3)

Likewise, policies governing the assigning of credit and grades in remedial programs also contribute to the differences among programs. In some instances, no credit is awarded for remedial coursework, especially when that coursework is delivered through supplementary assistance and tutoring rather than through formal structured courses. Some postsecondary institutions, however, do award credits for the purpose of financial aid, but they do not apply the remedial credits toward degree requirements. Roueche, Baker, and Snow (1984) documented an apparent growth in the number of postsecondary institutions awarding credit for remedial courses and applying that credit toward degree requirements between 1977 and 1982. In a study conducted by Wright and Cahalan (1985), however, the data reflected that almost 70% of postsecondary institutions do not award degree credit for any remedial courses. In fact, the data revealed:

The most frequent type of credit given for remedial courses is institutional credit, which counts in determining enrollment status and is part of a students record but does not count towards a degree or certificate completion. (1985, p. 15)

Although grades may be awarded in remedial courses, not all postsecondary institutions include these in computing student grade point averages; instead, they opt to use pass/fail or a similar marking system. In addition, some postsecondary institutions eliminate grades earned in remedial courses when students are classified as being in good standing or on academic probation (Bers, 1987). Generally, students enrolled in remedial courses are also enrolled in nonremedial coursework (Abraham, 1987a; 1987b; Mansfield, 1991; Roueche, Baker & Roueche, 1987).

Several teaching modes are used routinely in remedial programs. For example, special skills sections of existing courses, computer-assisted instruction, tutorials, self-contained classes, and self-paced modules characterize the vast range of instructional formats. Also, Abraham (1986) identified individual faculty and peer tutoring, supplemental testing, and self-paced programmed tests

as the most common supplements to remedial coursework and/or instruction.

Postsecondary institutions require that remedial instruction occur at several points during the students' college pursuits. Moreover, in some institutions, participation in the remedial program is either voluntary or mandatory for underprepared students with remedial experiences scheduled as early as the summer preceding the freshman year or during the first semester or the first year in which the student is enrolled (Wright & Cahalan, 1985).

For the most part, remedial courses, such as reading, writing, and mathematics, are often required rather than voluntarily taken (Lum, 1987). In fact, over 60% of colleges and universities throughout the United States practice mandatory placement in writing and mathematics, and approximately 50% of the institutions require mandatory placement in reading (Mansfield, 1991; Roueche, Baker, & Roueche, 1984; Wright & Cahalan, 1985). Often, timetables are associated with the required completion of credit hours or semesters of enrollments in remedial courses, "so that students must complete all remedial work

prior to a stipulated point in their academic careers" (Bers, 1987, p. 4).

Academic careers for entering freshmen who score below certain levels on admissions tests often begin with mandatory assessment and placement in remedial courses, such as reading, writing and mathematics. "These scores by default and many times by policy, are what defines 'college-level work'" (Abraham, 1987a, p. 45).

The admissions standards used by postsecondary institutions to assign students to college level work or remedial courses vary greatly. A study of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 15 member states revealed that SREB states use approximately 100 different tests for placement purposes in reading, mathematics, and writing. For example, 31 different tests are used for entry level placement in reading, 36 different tests in mathematics, and 30 different tests in writing (Abraham, 1987). Tests in these three areas range from institutionally developed to nationally-normed tests, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) (Abraham, 1986). Moreover, entry-level placement standards or scores for mathematics, reading, and

writing varied from as low as the first percentile to as high as the 94th percentile at some institutions (Abraham, 1987a; 1987b).

Grant and Hoeber (1987) indicate that, while the general use of test results is for course placement, an appropriately designed test can also provide the basis for a diagnostic assessment to evaluate specific academic strengths and weaknesses for underprepared college bound students. Nevertheless, the use of multiple tests in the SREB states and other states throughout the country with regard to writing, reading, and mathematics and the varied cut-off scores on those same tests strongly suggest:

There is no common understanding of what skills are needed to begin college-level work and no consensus on what college-level work is or how to identify students that required additional preparation before beginning college. (Quoted in Roueche, Baker, & Snow, 1987, p. 24)

While remedial programs may vary according to structure, resources, need, and the like, nearly all postsecondary institutions require some form of entry-level assessment which ultimately channels students into regular college-level coursework or remedial classes. Generally, underprepared students are either enrolled in voluntary or mandatory remedial programs.

In the next section, I will examine the literature relative to the effectiveness of collegiate remedial programs.

The Effectiveness of Remedial Programs

Although remedial programs have been present in higher education in varying forms for over a century (Maxwell, 1979), efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of these remedial programs did not begin in earnest until the mid-1960s. It was during this time that federal dollars were funneled into postsecondary programs specifically designed to promote equal educational opportunity (Kulik, Kulik & Schwalb, 1983). Along with the infusion of federal dollars, also came the requirement to conduct research activities to document the effectiveness of remedial programs (Boylan, 1982).

One of the first major studies designed to assess the effectiveness of remedial programs was reported by Donovan (1975). In his study of thirteen colleges offering basic skills courses, such as mathematics, English, and science, the data indicated that students who participated in the remedial programs consistently showed notable gain scores from pre-test to post-test on standardized tests. In fact, underprepared

students who participated in those basic skills courses consistently demonstrated higher scores on standardized testing instruments than those who did not participate in the remedial programs.

Subsequent studies of basic skills courses in remedial programs conducted by Allarie (1978), Bellucci (1981), Carter (1976), Moore (1977), Supplementary Education Program (1982), Sutherland and Sutherland (1982), Swindling (1982), Whimbey, Boylan, & Burke (1979), have yielded similar outcomes which strongly suggest that underprepared students who participate in remedial programs improve their skills as measured by a vast assortment of standardized and locally developed achievement measurements. However, the extent of this improvement varies from subject to subject and program to program.

Suen (1979), on the other hand, proposed a statistical approach using Step-Wise Regression to isolate the impacts of various treatments designed to improve grade point averages for underprepared students. Using this method to evaluate the Special Services (remedial) program at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Suen found that the remedial courses in English, mathematics, and study skills

appeared to have significant influence on improved grade point averages for underprepared students participating in the program.

Analysis of grade point averages has tended to be one of the main assessment measures for remedial programs. Consequently, substantial data exist to evaluate the impact of remedial activities on grade point averages. For example, Franco (1975) conducted a study at California State University-Fullerton. His findings indicated that students participating in a comprehensive remedial program with counseling, tutoring, learning assistance activities, and basic skills instruction improved their cumulative grades from an average of 1.73 to 2.32 following a year's participation in the program.

Similarly, Brown (1975) disclosed that approximately 80% of the students who participated in the basic skills curriculum at the University of Florida were able to raise their grade point averages from below 2.00 to averages above 2.00. At Keystone Junior College in Pennsylvania, 61% of underprepared students exceeded their predicted grade point average of less than 2.00 after one academic year in the remedial program (Farkas, 1982). Boylan (1979)

reported a similar gain of 69% for students participating in the remedial program at Bowling Green State University. These findings were also documented in studies conducted by Turner and others (1974), Burgess and others (1976), Haburton (1977), Thompson (1977), and Boylan (1983). The results indicated that those who participated in remedial programs tended to improve grade point averages on nearly every campus studied.

In addition, Kulik, Kulik, and Schwalb (1983) at the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Teaching and Learning analyzed the findings of 60 separate evaluation reports using the meta-analysis technique, which is designed to summarize a variety of research reports and correlate the characteristics of these reports to outcomes. For studies to be included in this meta-analysis, they had to involve high risk (underprepared) college students whose placement was determined by low test scores, low achievement in high school or college coursework, or membership in a socioeconomically disadvantaged group. Studies also had to report on measured outcomes for groups of students participating in remedial programs and in control programs. Of the 60 studies reviewed, 57

analyzed grade point averages of underprepared students participating in remedial programs as compared to control groups of students with similar backgrounds who had not participated in the programs. Of the 57 studies, 44 reported higher grade point averages for those students enrolled in remedial programs, and only 1 reported statistically significant differences in support of the control group. Overall, the grade point averages for students participating in remedial programs was 2.03 while the average for those not participating was 1.82. Although the difference is statistically significant, it is, however, only slightly higher. These findings were supported by other studies conducted by Roueche and Snow (1979), Martin and Blanc (1981), Peck and others (1981), Boylan (1983), and Boggs (1985).

The Kulik, Kulik, and Schwalb study (1983) also investigated the impact of remedial programs on the retention rates of underprepared students. Thirty studies which examined the effect of remedial programs on persistence in college were included in the research. Of the thirty studies reviewed, 21 reported a significantly higher rate of retention for program participants as compared to nonparticipants. In 5

studies, however, the reported retention rate was higher for nonparticipants; and in 4 studies, persistence rates were the same for both groups.

In a similar study, LePage and Zachel (1978) surveyed remedial programs at 103 universities and college in the midwest United States to ascertain the rates of retention among underprepared students enrolled in these programs. While the yearly retention rates ranged from 25% to 90%, the average retention rate reported was 66% with most institutions reporting retention rates of 55% to 75%. Although no control groups were involved in this study, the average retention rate for all students among institutions participating in the survey was 35% during the same time period.

A study involving all institutions in the University of Georgia System indicated that the rate of retention for students participating in remedial programs was several percentage points higher than the average retention rate for all institutions in the state. Similar findings were reported at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in comparing retention rates of those students who had participated in the remedial program with the institution-wide

retention rate. Also, the data revealed that the number of students from the remedial program placed on probation or dropped status was notably lower than the institutional average (Cashen, Fillippone, & Gajewski, 1981).

In a slightly different study, Helm and Chand (1983) compared the retention rates of underprepared students who had successfully completed remedial courses during the first semester of the freshman year with a group of similar students who had enrolled in remedial courses but failed to successfully complete them. Using registration as follow-up for the next three semesters, the authors determined that those who had successfully completed the remedial program were retained at higher rates than those who did not.

These studies have also been supported by results from a variety of other postsecondary institutions. All of the evidence reviewed suggests that participation in remedial programs is closely associated with higher rates of retention (Boylan & Bonham, 1992; Boylan, 1983; Gallini, Campbell and Hatch, 1986; LaPage & Zachel, 1978; Macmillan & Kester, 1973; Starks, 1982; U. S. Department of Education, 1982).

While grade point averages, gain scores, and retention rates appear to be the most common measures applied to assess the effectiveness of remedial programs, these programs yield, however, other, less measurable outcomes. The U. S. Department of Education (1982), for example, cites several instances of underprepared students leaving college after having accomplished their objectives but without completing degree requirements, for:

In many cases, program services were also instrumental in helping students to make career and life planning decisions which were quite productive for the individuals involved. Unfortunately, these decisions often resulted in students leaving college and were thus counted as 'losses' insofar as retention was concerned. (Quoted in Boylan, 1985, p. 4)

These exceptions, regardless of their positive impact on students, are not routinely identified in program assessment. Instead, current data simply reflect numbers or percentages of persistors and non-persistors, which invariably creates a distorted appraisal of program effectiveness. As Clowes (1984) has indicated:

The process stage is monitored through the assignment of academic credits, grades, and assessments of the student's persistence in the institution. Concurrently, a variety of opinions are formed by students and faculty about the instructional process and student performance

within the process phase. In the output phase, students emerge from the structured activities of the program both as individuals with opinions and feelings about the program and as statistics representative of their progress through the program. (p. 14)

Recognizing the need to augment research efforts with evaluations of students feelings and opinions regarding participation in remedial programs, Broadbent (1977), Donovan (1975), Gill and others (1987), Kinnebrew (1975), Losak, Schwartz, and Morris (1982), Rachavong (1979), Scherz, Michman and Tamir (1985), and Steward (1989) investigated student satisfaction with program activities through the use of either written questionnaires or surveys. Based upon their reviews of selected programs, the data indicated that participating students considered the remedial programs to have been quite beneficial and enjoyed their experiences.

Hence, it appears that underprepared students are inclined to rate collegiate remedial programs highly. The majority of the students surveyed expressed "satisfaction with the quality of services, the helpfulness of staff, and the degree to which the services have helped them be successful" (Boylan, 1983, p. 28).

For the most part, a review of the literature, research, and program reports on the effectiveness of postsecondary remedial programs strongly suggests that such programs are effective in helping underprepared students to succeed in college. Most research reports tend to identify student gain scores, grade point averages, and retention as the bases for evaluating the effectiveness of remedial programs; consequently, ratings of student satisfaction are employed less often. Hence, the traditional descriptive and quantitative assessments and measures of program effectiveness "are less meaningful in the context of remedial programs than in academic programs, and evaluation must focus on events subsequent to program completion" (Clowes, 1984, p. 15).

The evaluative process should include more than documentation of gain scores or the enumeration of varying categories of students; instead, evaluation should address the conditions and treatment of underprepared students which help to foster successful learning opportunities. Employing multidimensional research techniques, then, is absolutely essential in assessing the overall value of remedial activities at postsecondary institutions.

I propose that post-programmatic data (grade point averages, gain scores, and retention figures) are inconclusive and fail to identify those variables, such as students perceptions, which are less measurable and may directly or indirectly impact the academic performance and persistence of students participating in mandatory remedial programs.

In addition, I suggest that little or no attention has been paid to the human dimension, such as students' feelings and opinions, regarding mandatory participation in remedial programs. Hence, I submit that interview data and observational data of classroom interactions can "inform evaluation of student or student subgroup progress as they move through the remedial program" (Clowes, 1984, p.15). Interestingly, none of the literature addresses underprepared students' perceptions of remedial programs while they are actively involved in remedial coursework and/or activities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I begin this chapter with a personal account of my interest in remediation and qualitative research.

For ten years I worked in an urban school setting as a secondary teacher and as an administrator. During that time, my teaching experiences were basically limited to teaching youngsters assigned to the accelerated or college preparatory track. I never thought much about the youngsters or the teachers who were assigned to the lower tracks because I believed, rather naively, that everyone was being afforded similar educational experiences. It was not until I became a coordinator for the Secondary Curriculum Improvement Program (SCIP) at a local middle school in New Orleans that I began to realize that the educational experiences of those in the lower tracks were quite different from those in the higher tracks. When I approached the teachers about the differences in attitudes and presentation of materials, I received responses ranging from apathy to frustration and helplessness. It was at this point that I made a secret vow to myself to make a difference in the

educational experiences of these youngsters. Little did I know that someone was watching me and my efforts, and soon I was recruited for a position at a postsecondary institution.

For ten years, I worked as the director of two collegiate remedial programs. The first program, Student Support Services (formerly Special Services) was federally funded, and I assumed administrative responsibility for this program for three years. Also, part of my contract required me to teach two remedial writing classes each semester. The second remedial program, Developmental Studies, where I remained for seven years, was funded by the state. Although this was the larger of the two programs, my duties and responsibilities did not change. I interacted with students in both programs as a teacher, as an administrator, and as an occasional counselor. While the names were different, the primary mission of each program was to provide academic support--remediation.

During my tenure as director of each program, I constantly grappled with my own emotions and those of the students. While I was keenly aware of the political controversy surrounding collegiate remedial

programs, I had to become sensitized to the emotional trauma that often accompanied students' mandatory participation in a remedial program. The students often referred to the program as demeaning, discriminatory, wasteful, frustrating, and childish.

I can recall no instance of a student extending a sincere "thanks" for having been placed in a remedial program. I only recall tears, bitterness, and overt hostility. I soon found myself becoming very empathic to the students who would come to the institution believing that they had been adequately prepared for college and later discovering that they were underprepared for college-level work. I often found myself speculating about these students and their personal coping mechanisms, if any, once they were actually confronted with the reality of the remedial classroom. How could they be successful in a classroom environment "fraught with frustration, deprivation and loss of self-esteem" (Guinta, Bonifacio, & McVey, 1987, p. 23)? More importantly, did the students perceive mandatory participation in a remedial program as an imposition, a barrier, or academic support? I needed to know the answers to these questions to justify the denial of students'

numerous requests to be assigned to regular college classes. The answers I needed, however, were not readily available.

According to the quantitative measures on file, such as pre and post test scores, attrition rates, and percentage of students exiting the remedial program each semester, I surmised that the program was working for the majority and that the students whom I encountered were simply going through typical anxiety associated with the freshman year experience.

Although I told myself this repeatedly, I knew that the students' feelings and frustrations were not actually reflected in the data and the annual reports. I knew from observations in my own remedial classroom and my personal encounters with students in my office that some students moved from overt hostility to some semblance of complacency during their first semester in the remedial program. I do not recall exactly when or how this transformation in their attitudes occurred, but it happened repeatedly each semester. It was obvious that students' perception of mandatory participation in a remedial program were influencing their level of involvement.

It was probably this transformation in attitude and behavior that provided the impetus for this research project. Through classroom observations and intense, emotional counseling sessions with students, I began to realize that a viable remedial program could not limit its evaluation of program effectiveness to quantitative data when the problem of remediation is such an emotional issue for a significant number of entering freshmen. For example:

The student entering college with the illusion of having no academic weaknesses, of being able to be successful with a minimal amount of sacrifice, and with an unrealistically high level of career aspiration, encounters the classroom experience as one that satisfies no expectations and shatters many illusions. (Guinta, Bonifacio, & McVey, 1987, p. 22)

Although these researchers may attribute the frustrations and trepidation of remedial students to shattered illusions and the reality of being assigned to remedial courses, I can not definitively affirm their assessments. Based upon my observations, not all students react to and experience remedial activities in the same manner. The complexity of human emotions and behavior in a remedial classroom should not be reduced to broad generalizations, which assume homogeneity of purpose, preparation, and

background on the part of the students (Smith, 1982).

As Pinar (1988) observes:

One danger is that, relying upon rules of conduct and generalization concerning types of situations, one dulls new situations. They become like past ones. That is, of course, the meaning of generalization: looking for in the new what has been seen in the old. One focuses on what is general or common to the situations, not on what is unique to each. (p. 136)

It was, perhaps, my aspiration to focus on some unique aspect of remediation that heightened my desire to pursue less measurable outcomes. More importantly, I felt compelled to gain a keener insight of the students' remedial experiences and their responses to them. Hence, I realized that quantitative data would be too restrictive for my purpose and would not allow me the flexibility to investigate data generated through the "human lens" (Smith, 1982, p. 7).

Qualitative research, however, seems to offer me another alternative, specifically:

the process of designing mainstream qualitative research that entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, that values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives, that views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, and that is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as primary data. (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 11)

Certainly, qualitative research can afford me the flexibility (Barker, 1968; Blurton-Jones, 1972; Denzin, 1978; 1970; Erickson, 1977; Goodenough, 1971; Jacob, 1988; Mead, 1970; Sanday, 1979; Spradley, 1979) to explore the inside of a remedial program through the eyes of students who are forced to participate in remedial activities. The various approaches to qualitative research "assumes that systematic inquiry must occur in a natural setting rather than an artificially constrained one such as an experiment" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 10).

The strength of qualitative research appears to be the emphasis on the participants' words and actions which must be a significant part of this research project.

To this end, I employed interviewing as a primary approach to data gathering which was augmented by participant observation to go beyond the surface and understand the impact of remediation on the feelings and opinions of the research participants. From my perspective, this research is absolutely essential to adequately address the needs of underprepared students.

As I conclude this section which acknowledges my personal interest in remediation and qualitative research, I use the next section to describe the research settings and to provide a theoretical framework for the methodological procedures used in this case study research.

Setting and Background of Research

The University

The University is an open admissions institution offering a range of basic degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences, education, business and the technologies, and a graduate degree program in Social Work. The University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the graduate program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

The University was primarily established for the education of African American citizens of the metropolitan area in which it is located and the state in general. While the University actively recruits and admits qualified students without regard to race, color, origin, religion, age, sex, or physical handicap, it maintains a strong commitment to serving the higher education needs of the disadvantaged with a

nurturing and supportive environment. The 1989-92

University catalog states the following:

The mission of the University is to create and maintain an environment conducive to learning and growth, to promote the upward mobility to all people by preparing them to enter into new as well as traditional careers, and to equip them to function optimally in the mainstream of American society. . . . The University provides a sound education tailored to special needs of students coming to an open admissions institution and prepares students for full participation in a complex and changing society. The University offers a liberal education directed toward the achievement of higher literacy and a broad intellectual development, which in turn serves as a formulation for training in one of the professions. . . . (p. 25)

Given the University's open admissions policy and the poor academic preparation of many entering students, the University devotes considerable resources to various developmental/remedial services to help students who come with poor academic preparation. Developmental (remedial) courses are offered in the three basic skill areas - reading, writing, and mathematics.

The next section provides a general overview of the remedial program.

The Remedial Program

The Remedial Program has been defined as a unit that provides academic support for students who need

to strengthen their educational preparation in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as those students who have been out of the formal school setting for a number of years. The program grew out of a commitment to provide positive, successful educational experiences for those students who enroll at the University. In 1985, the Remedial Program was identified as an exemplary one by the National Center for Developmental Education at Appalachian State University.

According to the faculty and staff assigned to the Remedial Program, past educational achievement records are not the only indication of an individual's ability to learn. Instructors and counselors facilitate actions that are based on the belief that all students can learn. Instruction consists of methods by which individual learning needs can be met, and value is placed on the worth of the individual as well as on the importance of promoting his/her social and economic well-being. Comprehensive counseling and tutoring services are available for students who have other problems that may affect their postsecondary education.

Students must be assigned to the remedial program to participate in all related activities. The next section describes that placement process.

Placement in Remedial Courses

Students are placed in remedial courses as a result of their performance on placement tests and the American College Test (ACT) required of all incoming freshmen and transfer students. Students earn three hours credit in these classes, but this credit does not apply toward a degree. Once placed in developmental/remedial sections, students are given a curriculum which follows as much as possible the concepts of mastery learning and divides the skills to be learned into subskills, and the content into modules which can be pursued at a varied pace by the student.

Tables 1 and 2 show the number and percentage of incoming students who are placed into various developmental studies (remedial) courses. It should be noted that prior to fall 1987, the developmental staff produced its own placement tests; beginning in the fall 1987, the series of standardized tests were used for placement.

TABLE 1

Percent of Students Tested Who Placed in
At Least One Developmental Course

Fall 1988	Fall 1989	Fall 1990	Fall 1991	Fall 1992
82.2%	83.5%	81.3%	86.4%	87.2%

Source: Board of Regents Annual Reports

TABLE 2

Percent of Students Who Take 1, 2, or 3
Developmental Courses

No. of Courses Tested into	Fall 1988	Fall 1989	Fall 1990	Fall 1991	Fall 1992
1	19.7	25.0	23.4	26.5	24.2
2	26.9	25.6	27.5	18.4	21.3
3	35.5	32.9	30.1	41.4	41.7

Source: Board of Regents Annual Reports

Remedial Reading Course

The remedial reading course is a skills building course designed to improve reading efficiency with emphasis on vocabulary development, comprehension and study skills. To test entry level reading skills, students are administered the California Achievement Test. Those who score 12th grade or above immediately test out of developmental reading; those who score between 11 and 11.9 are retested during the first week of classes to see if they might score 12 or above on a second attempt. And, those who score 10.9 or below are placed into Developmental Reading 101.

To exit this course, students take the same examination which was used for placement, and they must make the scores (listed above) which allowed placement in the regular curriculum. For those students who are unsuccessful, an NC grade (no credit) is earned, which allows them to enroll in the course the following semester, without penalty of failure. If, after the second semester of enrollment, the student does not attain the required reading level (12.0), the student will receive a grade of F. A majority of students require two semesters to attain

the required skill level to exit the remedial reading program.

Instructors of Remedial Courses

There are four instructors assigned to teach remedial reading at the University. Two have consented to participate in the research project. Both have identical class schedules with all classes held in the reading laboratory. Each instructor has a teaching load of four classes (12 semester hours) with two classes (1 per instructor) occurring simultaneously in the reading laboratory. There are no walls to divide the laboratory; instead, bookshelves and mobile carts are used to provide a line of demarcation.

Mrs. Morgan has taught remedial reading at the University for 12 years. Prior to assuming this position, she taught high school English to accelerated classes and academically gifted students for 18 years in the local urban school system. Mrs. Morgan's interview session is provided in Appendix K.

Mrs. Day has taught remedial reading at the University for 13 years. In 1986, she was recognized as an outstanding developmental educator by the Louisiana Association for Developmental Education

(LADE). Her teaching experiences also include 20 years as an elementary teacher in the local urban school system. Mrs. Day's interview session is provided in Appendix L.

The Research Method

Qualitative research is an investigative approach based on a phenomenological epistemology. This method does not formulate hypotheses or questions but probes for understanding through information that emerges from the investigation. This information is generally gathered from two major processes: observation and interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Rather than adopting one paradigm to the exclusion of the other, Guba and Lincoln (1983) indicated:

[that] the choice between paradigms in any inquiry or evaluation ought to be made on the basis of the best fit between the assumptions and postures of a paradigm and the phenomenon being studied or evaluated. (p. 56)

Based upon these comments, I have chosen case study research for this investigation of students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a collegiate

remedial reading program. Yin (1989) defined case study research as follows:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 23)

Case studies are particularly useful in evaluation research for explaining "the causal links in real-life interventions," describing the "real-life context in which an intervention has occurred," and exploring "those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes" (Yin, 1989, p. 25). It is important for the researcher to utilize a combination of methodologies when preparing a case study because a variety allows the researchers to contextualize on a particular problem, or to observe it and investigate it from several perspectives (Denzin, 1989; Flick, 1992; Goetz and LeCompte, 1984; Mathison, 1988; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). Such an approach, establishes a degree of structural corroboration as a means of increasing reliability. As Eisner (1985) suggests:

Structural corroboration is a process of gathering data or information and using it to establish links that eventually create a whole that is supported by the bits of evidence that

constitute it. Evidence is structurally corroborative when pieces of evidence validate each other, the story holds up, the pieces fit, it makes sense, the facts are consistent. (p. 241)

Evidence for case study research may be based on six different sources: archival records, documents, participant observation, direct observation, interviews, and physical artifacts (Wilson, 1979; Yin, 1984). For this study, I followed the existing guidelines for conducting case study research and incorporated three of the methodologies into my research design as outlined below.

Participant Observation

This method affords the researcher the opportunity to go beyond phenomenological description and theories about the underlying structural barriers and power relations which may influence the way research subjects actively and creatively make sense of their social world (Atkinson, 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Roman, 1988; Spradley, 1980). The researcher assumes a more active role by immersing herself/himself in the culture under investigation. "Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people" (Spradley, 1980, p. 3). The researcher accomplishes this task by devoting a

sufficient amount of time to direct observations of events as they occur, actively participating in the activities done by the research participants, concomitantly taking ample notes, utilizing the research subjects' own voices, and analyzing situations as they gradually and inductively unfold (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980; Peltó & Peltó, 1978; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). With such an in-depth investigation of the cultural context and experiences of the research participants, the researcher must utilize all of his/her sensory skills to understand and explain the ordinary, spectacular and unexpected events that may occur. The necessity of this task is stated by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) as follows:

In observing people's behavior we derive hypotheses from our cultural knowledge to describe and explain their actions, and we test these out against further information. . . . we have to investigate the context in which the action occurs; that is, we have to generate possible meanings from the culture for surrounding or other apparently relevant actions. (p. 16)

Insofar as it is possible, this case study research followed the existing principles for conducting ethnographic research. The fieldwork method for this research is outlined below.

Conducting Fieldwork

Initially, in order to gain access to the remedial reading program, I explained the nature and focus of my research to the program director and the dean of the Junior Division in order to obtain their permission to begin preliminary fieldwork in January, 1992. I then met with the two remedial reading instructors in the reading laboratory to apprise them of my intent and to solicit their support and cooperation, for Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have indicated:

[that] the process of achieving access is not merely a practical matter. Not only does its achievement depend upon theoretical understanding, often disguised as 'native wit', but discovery of obstacles to access, and perhaps of effective means of overcoming them, themselves provide insights into the social organization of the setting. (p. 54)

Upon entering the field of study in April, 1992, I decided to observe the classroom culture of one remedial reading class in the reading laboratory for the entire observation period (April, 1992 - May, 1992; September, 1992 - November, 1992). My normal routine was to take a seat in the middle of the laboratory in the rear so that I could observe the entire laboratory environment. The instructor

introduced me to the class each semester and afforded me the opportunity to explain the nature of my research. The students' responses appeared to be positive but not particularly enthusiastic. My omnipresent note writing seemed to stimulate the students curiosity, so I allowed them to read my notes whenever they expressed a desire to do so. This, of course, was for a brief period because the students soon lost interest and commented to each other how the notes were simply "describing what's going on in the classroom" and appeared to be a "waste of my time." I assured the students that the notes would be beneficial to all of us later.

Most of the time spent in the field was devoted to the careful observation of the teacher interacting with the students, the students interacting with each other, and the instructional materials utilized in the reading laboratory. I always had a notebook and a tape recorder with me to preserve events as accurately as possible. For the most part, I followed this routine for 3 hours per week from 12:05-1:20 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the observation period. I chose this particular time period because it was

during my declared lunch hour which freed me from any distractions or professional obligations.

With respect to participant observation, I closely documented and analyzed the reactions to and interactions with me by the research participants as legitimate data. This assisted me in acknowledging possible distortions in my data because of my presence at the research site. Also on several occasions, the instructors and students engaged me in the classroom discussions regarding controversial issues, such as abortion, racism, and Operation Desert Storm. Having been accepted as a member of the classroom environment, I then proceeded to the next phase of my research, interviewing. In the next section I discuss the use of interviews as my primary source of data gathering.

Interviews

Structured, unstructured, and semistructured interviews provide another valuable source of data for case study research (Mishler, 1986; Patton, 1980). The interview allows the researcher "to follow up leads that show up during the interview and thus obtain more data and greater clarity" (Borg, 1987, p. 110).

Tape recordings of the interviews provide the most accurate means for collecting information (Merriam, 1988). When the interviewer relies on notetaking instead of recording the interview, she/he may omit or overlook important information. In addition, since the interviewer decides what will be recorded in the notes, her/his notes may be somewhat biased. For instance, "he may write information that agrees with his preconceived ideas or beliefs and omit information that disagrees with these beliefs" (Borg, 1987, p. 111).

Structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask specific questions from an interview guide and discourage any deviation from these questions. During unstructured interviews, however, the interviewer does not use an interview guide but generally asks questions or makes comments intended to direct the respondent toward giving information to satisfy the interviewer's objectives. Unstructured interviews require a great deal of judgment on the interviewer's part as to what she/he should ask, record, and pursue further (Borg, 1987). Moreover, unstructured interviews are "particularly useful when the researcher does not know enough about a phenomenon to

ask relevant questions [here] the interview is essentially exploratory" (Merriam, 1988, p. 74).

The semistructured interviews are those most commonly used in educational research (Borg, 1987). The interviewer follows a guide that lists questions covering all necessary information required by the researcher. The "less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways" (Merriam, 1988, p. 73). The interviewer also has the option to follow up any responses in an effort to obtain additional information or clarify the respondent's answers, for the "purpose of the interview . . . is 'not to put things in someone else's mind . . . but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed' " (Quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 73).

In the next section I discuss the methods I used to select participants for this research project.

Identifying and Selecting Participants

Having observed the reading class for two observation periods, as indicated earlier in this section, I approached the reading instructor during the second observation period (September, 1992-November, 1992) and solicited her support in referring

students to me as possible participants. In addition, I approached students who had indicated a desire to be included in the study because they "had something to say."

At this point, I had no preconceived number of participants to influence my decision; instead, I was guided by Merriam's observations (1988):

Unlike survey research where the number and representativeness of the sample are major considerations, in this type of research the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but rather the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon. (p. 77)

Based upon these observations, I used ten students for this study. Initially, the teacher sought the participation of students who were listed on the official class roster for the identified class (12:05-1:20 p.m.).

The official class roster had 22 students listed; however, four never reported to class; three officially dropped the class; three declined the interview; and two agreed but never reported for the scheduled interview sessions. For those students who did participate, I indicated that each student would be required to participate in one scheduled session and one follow-up session, if necessary. I also

indicated that I would use pseudonyms or initials to maintain strict confidentiality. Hence, six African American females and four African American males participated in this study.

The next section describes other related procedures employed during the interviewing process.

Conducting Interviews

For the initial stage of my research, I conducted informal and semistructured interviews with two remedial reading instructors to ascertain their attitudes toward remedial education and remedial reading courses at a postsecondary institution. The instructors were also encouraged to discuss the strategies that they utilize in the classroom to increase the literacy levels of their students. I encouraged each instructor to speak freely while I recorded the comments on tape and made written notes during each interview session. In establishing the focus of the interviews, I was guided by Yin's (1989) observations:

Most commonly, case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which an investigator can ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents' opinions about events. In some situations, the investigator may even ask the respondent to propose her or his own insights into certain occurrences and may use

such propositions as the basis for further inquiry. (p. 89)

In almost all instances, the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in the instructors' planning area in the rear of the classroom, for "interviewing them on their own territory is the best strategy since it allows them to relax much more than they would in either a university office or a public place like a restaurant" (Yin, 1989, p. 125). In addition, I had no guiding questions or pre-determined time limits; instead, I came prepared with sufficient background information on the remedial reading program to follow important leads presented at the time by each instructor.

Similarly, students participated in individual interview sessions which were conducted in the laboratory immediately after class or in the reading instructor's office. For the most part, students preferred reporting to the office which was located on another level in the same building. As indicated to me later, students felt more comfortable in expressing their views in a setting which was not in close proximity to the classroom environment. They did not want any of the instructors to "overhear" their

comments. Although I agreed to the location, students still appeared to be guarded and rather cautious in their responses.

I began each interview session by being both forthright and self-disclosing. I explained my personal and professional interests in the research project, and I explained the various components of my research project with particular emphasis on the importance of their role and candor in discussing their perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program. In return, I assured each student complete confidentiality and anonymity. Although none seemed to be overly concerned or reluctant in expressing their views, I indicated that I would change their names in the final document to guarantee their anonymity. The length of each session and the quantity of recorded data varied depending on the participant's remedial experiences and class schedule. The amount of recorded data provided by each participant ranged from 20-35 minutes. On several occasions, I conducted follow-up interviews with at least four participants to pose clarifying questions and to resolve ambiguities that I had overlooked initially.

In conducting the interviews, I was cognizant of Lofland (1971) and his recommendations which assert that "for most interviewing situations it is most productive of information for the interviewer to assume a non-argumentative, supportive, and sympathetically understanding attitude" (p. 89). Moreover, Lofland (1971) contends that "successful interviewing is not unlike carrying on unthreatening, self-controlled, supportive, polite, and cordial interaction in everyday life" (p. 90).

Hence, I encouraged the participants to speak freely about the remedial program and especially their views on mandatory participation. As participants began to disclose their views, I listened closely to details and observed their body language and gestures to formulate additional questions as they evolved throughout the interview process. None of the participants appeared to be uncomfortable or distracted with the presence of a tape recorder; in fact, they seemed to be enthusiastic about having their opinions recorded.

Generally, I allowed the participants to talk with few interruptions and used questions to obtain specific information and clarification on certain

issues pertinent to the research project. This interviewing technique was primarily guided by Marshall and Rossman (1989) who assert:

The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses. This, in fact, is an assumption fundamental to qualitative research--the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. (p. 82)

In addition to tape recording the sessions, I maintained copious notes which included both verbal and non-verbal information. I also kept a detailed account of my own personal reflections which I thought would assist me in the analysis of my data and construction of the final narrative. These reflections were included as an essential component of the overall case data since they served to guide me in the collection of pertinent documents. The following section will identify the manner in which I gathered and analyzed various documents to corroborate data as it emerged in the study.

Reviewing Documents

Document reviews are an important source of data for the case writer. Documents prepared by agencies and institutions provide an essential background for

case study research on these organizations (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). Documents must be carefully employed and should not always be interpreted as fact (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), but they do provide insights into the way institutional members perceive the organization and themselves, what the purposes are, and how it functions (Burgess, 1982; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Riley, 1963). A variety of documents is usually available in agencies and educational institutions, such as:

- letters, memoranda, and other communiques;
- agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events;
- administrative documents-proposals, progress reports, and other internal documents;
- formal studies or evaluations of the same 'site' under study; and
- newsclippings and other articles appearing in the mass media. (Yin, 1989, p. 85)

The most important use of these documents in a case study is to "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 86). In fact, it is important for the researcher to remember that in reviewing any document "that it was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done" (p. 87). Based upon this premise, I identified documents that were pertinent to

this research project as indicated in the following section.

Prior to the initial fieldwork, I reviewed questionnaires, which had been completed by all students enrolled in the remedial programs, to ascertain socioeconomic background, pre-college preparation and other related information possibly relevant to my understanding of a student's placement and mandatory participation in a remedial program. Such data enabled me to generate a profile of remedial students at the University and restrain any preconceived notions I may have regarding the so-called "general" characteristics of remedial students. Also, I reviewed the 1990-91 and 1991-92 Annual reports for the remedial program, academic progress Reports, and the course syllabus to familiarize myself with the goals, objectives, and course requirements of the remedial reading program, for "documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (Merriam, 1988, p. 118).

Analyzing Data

Even though analysis had been an ongoing activity throughout the research project, developing the case

study data base (Yin, 1984) or the case record (Patton, 1980), required the organization and sorting of all data into a comprehensive resource package which made all information easily retrievable. In fact, according to Merriam (1988):

Once a decision has been made to end simultaneous data collection and analysis, the information must be organized so that intensive analysis can begin. All the information one has about the case should be brought together--interview logs or transcripts, field notes, reports, records, the investigator's own documents, physical traces, and reflective memos. (p. 126)

With this in mind, I proceeded with my analysis by reviewing the research proposal (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984) to remind me of my focus and the original research questions. Next, I organized the data either topically or chronologically and read through the case record or the case data base several times to make comments, jot down notes, questions, and general observations in the margins. At this stage, I was virtually "holding a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments, and so on" (Merriam, 1988, p. 131). Also, I listened and watched for opinions and ideas which were repeated frequently during the interviews and participant observations to come up with plausible generalizations and conclusions

grounded on a preponderance of data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) and units of information which later served as the basis for defining categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Whenever possible, I maintained a separate listing of major ideas that seemed to cut across the data. In short, I was looking for recurring regularities and patterns in the data which could be transformed into broad categories. For example, testing emerged as an important issue of the students from the repeated and consistent references to standardized testing, placement testing, and unit testing. This issue was later identified as an emerging category. In keeping with this practice, I also listened for any additional idea, concept, or opinion which was communicated with intense emotion because I suspected that it could become a unit of information or a core category. I then returned to my data base and coded the categories in the appropriate margins of the field notes, interview transcripts or documents. I continued with this process until I was satisfied that the necessary categories had been "fleshed out" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 99) and "made more robust by searching through the data for more and better units of relevant information" (Merriam, 1988,

p. 135). During this process, I was guided by Holsti's guidelines (1969) by which to assess the efficacy of categories:

1. The categories should reflect the purpose of the research. Sometimes one becomes committed to categories developed early on; care should be taken to ensure that categories are congruent with research goals and questions.
2. The categories should be exhaustive--that is, 'all relevant items in the sample of documents under study must be capable of being placed into a category.'
3. The categories should be mutually exclusive--no single unit of material should be placed in more than one category.
4. The categories should be independent in that 'assignment of any datum into a category [will] not affect the classification of other data' (pp. 99-100).

In addition, all categories should derive from a single classification principle (Merriam, 1988).

In organizing the data into categories for further analysis and for writing the results of the study, I used file folders to assist me with the organization of my data. I made photocopies of the entire data base with notations in the margins which included tentative categories and themes emerging from the raw data. The photocopied pages were cut according to the coded sections and placed into the

appropriate file folder which had been labeled by theme or category. The units of data were also coded by the interviewees' names and original page numbers. After organizing the data base and completing the analysis of the fieldnotes as explicated in this section, I began the task of constructing the narrative. In the next section, I will describe how I constructed the narrative for this case study research.

Constructing the Narrative

In constructing the narrative, I was mindful of Lofland (1974) and Merriam (1988) who maintain that there is no standard format for reporting the results of case study research. For instance:

Qualitative field research seems distinct in the degree to which its practitioners lack a public, shared, and codified conception of how what they do is done, and how what they report should be formulated. (Quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 185-186)

Similarly, Stake (1993) observes that:

Even though committed to empathy and multiple realities, it is the researcher who decides what is the case's own story, or at least as to what of the case's own story will he or she report It may be the case's own story but it is the researcher's dressing of the case's own story. This is not to dismiss the aim of finding the story that best represents the case

but to remind that the criteria of representation ultimately are decided by the researcher. (p. 5)

With this in mind, I proceeded by assembling the case record and rereading fieldnotes. I then arranged the data according to the research questions enumerated in Chapter 1. This process required me to re-examine the data several times to sort out information that was redundant and repetitive. To reduce the possibility of misinterpretation, I clarified my meaning by identifying the different ways the occurrence was being seen and/or documented (Flick, 1992). This process required the checking and matching of tapes against fieldnotes and documents for appropriate verification and validity. I paid particular attention to those phenomena that addressed the original purpose of the study and arranged them in an outline according to the broad categories.

Based upon my constant dialogue with the data, the outline was refined, revised and adjusted throughout the entire construction process. Portions of the report were disseminated to the remedial reading instructors and students to confirm the accuracy of what I had written. Their comments were

useful, and I made some minor corrections based on the explanations.

In addition, during the entire process of writing the case study report, I was keenly aware that:

Because the primary instrument in qualitative case study research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through one's worldview, one's values, one's perspective. It might be recalled that one of the philosophical assumptions underlying this type of research is that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality. (Merriam, 1988, p. 39)

Therefore, realizing my potential influence on the findings of this case study research, I used the data generated from interviews, observations and documents to represent the perceived remedial experiences of African American students enrolled at a postsecondary institution. As I have used this chapter to explicate the methodological procedures and theoretical support for this case study research, I use Chapter 4 to discuss the findings and the import of the related conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS

Academically underprepared students who are required to participate in collegiate remedial programs are students who need assistance in overcoming skill deficiencies. Depending on the postsecondary institution, these underprepared students are often classified as developmental, high-risk, low achieving, remedial, disadvantaged, underprepared, new-type, minority, open-admissions, undereducated, misprepared, miseducated, transitional, academically disadvantaged, and culturally disadvantaged (Newton, 1982). Identification of these students is usually based on current scores in mathematics, English, or reading tests combined with information on goals, study habits, and attitudes (Bray, 1987).

According to Ahrendt (1987), Cross (1976), Moore (1970), Roueche (1968), Roueche and Armes (1983), Roueche and Kirk (1973), and Roueche and Snow (1979) underprepared students share a certain set of learner characteristics, such as debilitating anxiety, unrealistic goals, learned helplessness, fear of

failure, poor self-concept, limited motivation, lack of confidence, emotional and psychological disturbances, and learning disabilities. In addition, Guinta, Bonifacio, and McVey (1987) and Shroyer (1980) posit that underprepared students may also be characterized as students who are satisfactory or above average in the urban high schools and achieve at the tops of their respective peer groups. Although most underprepared college bound students are serious about undertaking postsecondary work, these students almost always underestimate the level of commitment and the amount of effort necessary to reach their goals.

The profile of the students who participate in the remedial program at the University is no different from the ones cited above. Almost all of the entering freshmen come from the local area and are often identified as first-generation college students. That is, neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree. They are the products of an inferior, underfunded public school system, and they have grown up in the poorest neighborhoods in the city, and their scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) place them in remedial sections of

reading, English, and mathematics. Data taken from Freshmen Orientation Survey (1992) are presented in tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 to corroborate the individual profiles provided in this research. At least 80% of first-time entering freshmen enroll in at least one remedial course.

TABLE 3
Age Distribution

Age	Number	Percent
18 or under	6	1.7
19-20	220	62.5
21-25	84	23.9
26-30	14	4.0
31-35	12	3.4
36-40	7	2.0
41 & over	1	2.3

TABLE 4
Gender/Ethnic Origin

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	146	41.5
Female	206	58.5
Ethnic Origin		
African American	345	98.0
Caucasian	2	.6
African	4	1.1

TABLE 5
Students' Domicile

Students' Domicile	Number	Percent
Both parents	172	48.9
Mother	99	28.1
Father	5	1.4
Spouse	8	2.3
Another relative	31	8.8
Roommate	13	3.7
Alone	24	6.8

TABLE 6
Annual Income of Students' Parents

	Number	Percent
Less than \$10,000	226	64.2
\$10,000-14,999	30	8.5
\$15,000-19,999	27	7.7
\$20,000-24,999	21	6.0
\$25,000-29,999	12	3.4
\$30,000-34,999	12	3.4
\$35,000-39,999	6	1.7
\$40,000-44,999	5	1.4
\$45,000-49,999	2	.6
\$50,000 or more	11	3.1

TABLE 7
Degree Aspirations

	Number	Percent
Associate	5	1.4
Bachelors	74	21.0
Certificate	12	3.0
Master's	96	27.3
First Professional	28	8.0
Doctorate	28	8.0
Postdoctoral study	2	.6
Undecided	107	30.4

Based upon the referenced data, the majority of underprepared students at the University are African American females, who range in age from 19-25, and

live at home with at least one parent with an income which places them at or below the poverty line. In addition, these students are either undecided in degree aspirations or wish to attain at least a baccalaureate degree. A brief profile of the students who participated in this research is provided below.

Toya was 18 years old when this interview session was conducted. She enrolled at the University at least two weeks after the first day of classes. She is a high school graduate of the local urban school district. She graduated in the top 20% of her high school class with a 3.2 grade point average. Although Toya believed that she was "college material," she was assigned to three remedial courses. Toya's interview session is provided in Appendix A.

Jan is a graduate of the local urban school district. At the time of her interview session, she was 18 years old. Jan indicated that she was not assigned to a college preparatory curriculum in high school. According to Jan, her grades ranged from B to B-. Because of her low ACT scores, Jan was not surprised when she was assigned to three remedial courses. Upon successful completion of the remedial courses, Jan plans to transfer to another university

to pursue a degree in forensic medicine. Jan's interview session is provided in Appendix B.

Donna was 19 years old when this interview was conducted. She is a transfer student from a nearby small, private historically black university. Although she was not enrolled in any remedial courses at the previous institution, she was assigned to three remedial courses at the University. She is a graduate of a "magnet high school where she participated in a College preparatory curriculum designed for advanced students. Donna's interview is provided in Appendix C.

Toni is a graduate of a local catholic high school where she participated in a college preparatory program. At the time of the interview, Toni was 18 years old. Toni works at a local fast food restaurant where she began her employment during her senior year in high school. She is completing her second semester in three remedial courses. She is a single parent and attends classes at the University while her mother babysits her one year old daughter. Toni's interview is provided in Appendix D.

Brad was 32 years old at the time of his interview session. He enrolled at the University

after having been out of school for 15 years. He is a graduate of a local high school in the urban school district. Brad has enrolled at the University to pursue a baccalaureate degree to prepare himself for possible advancement in his career. He is enrolled in three remedial courses. Brad's interview is provided in Appendix E.

Ray enrolled at the University after having worked at a local fast food restaurant for one year after high school graduation. He was enrolled in a "regular" high school curriculum where he maintained a C average at a local urban high school. At the time of this interview, Ray was 19 years old. He is completing his second semester in three remedial courses. Ray's interview is provided in Appendix F.

Cora was 19 years old when this interview session was conducted. While completing her senior year in high school in the local urban school district, Cora enlisted in the United States Army. Upon graduating from high school, she was called to active duty for one year. She has enrolled at the University to continue her education. Cora was assigned to three remedial courses. Cora's interview is provided in Appendix G.

Greg is a graduate of the local school district where he participated in a regular high school curriculum. He began working full-time at a local fast food restaurant immediately after graduation; therefore, he delayed enrollment at the University for one year. At the time of his interview session, Greg was 19 years old. He is enrolled in three remedial courses and continues to work full-time. Greg's interview is provided in Appendix H.

Kya was 18 years old during her interview session. She is a graduate of a private, all girls Catholic high school in the local school district. She graduated in the upper third of her high school class with a B average. Although she was enrolled in a college preparatory program in high school, she was assigned to three remedial courses. Upon completion of these courses, Kya plans to transfer to Oklahoma University to major in education. Kya's interview is provided in Appendix I.

Carl is a graduate of the local urban school district. According to Carl, he maintained a B/C average and graduated in the top 20% of his class. He anticipated placement in remedial courses since his ACT scores were very low. Carl plans to transfer to

UNO to pursue a baccalaureate degree in telecommunications. Carl is enrolled in three remedial courses. Carl's interview is provided in Appendix J.

In compiling a profile of the students who participated in this study, I found that their traits were almost identical to the characteristics of underprepared students delineated in the research. Specifically, six participants are African American females who range in age from 18-19; three are African American males who range in age from 18-19, and one is an African American male who is 32 years of age. Two students, one male and one female, ranked themselves in the upper 10% of their respective high school graduating classes. All tested into three remedial courses (reading, writing, and mathematics); consequently, all are participating in the remedial program as a result of mandatory assessment and placement for those students who do not score above certain cutoff scores on standardized tests; two are repeating the classes for a second semester. With the exception of the 32 year old student, all are living at home with parent(s). When queried as to what they expected to gain from their participation in

the remedial program, I received responses which indicated a need for a second chance (Roueche, 1968) or another opportunity to excel in schooling:

Ray: I'm still trying to get at the starting line. It is . . . like I'm in training for something.

Greg: . . . It's like getting another chance to do everything right, especially this semester.

I also received a response which was void of hope and had a somber sound of helplessness (Seligman, 1975) and a fear of failure:

Ray: To tell you the truth, right now, I am trying to get out of remedials. Right now, trying to see if I can hang with it and everything. I believe I could. I am just trying to take it one step at a time. . . . After I get out of remedials, then I could tell you what happens . . . what my goals are in life.

Just as I heard a voice of sadness and helplessness, I also heard voices of hope and high career aspirations:

Jan: With the education I'm getting now, I plan to pursue a career in forensic medic

Kya: I wanted to major in nursing at first, but I'm afraid of needles and blood. I'm scared of my own, so I'm going into education. I've always felt that was my calling. . . . I like working with children at about the fourth grade . . . the age of nine.

I also heard someone pleading for justice and actually an opportunity to rebuild self-esteem:

Cora: Well, basically, it may not sound right the way I say it, but I want respect because the minority is the main generation today. You have to respect yourself to get respect. And, I am here to go out into the world and gain respect for myself and for my peers. . .

And, finally, I received a cynical but strong endorsement of the remedial program:

Carl: I don't think they have enough people in there. Even if you don't think you need it, everyone should take the remedial courses. They will boost your grades, and they will help you down the line.

Admittedly, there is a wide variance in students' expectations of the value or gain in participating in a remedial program. This variance could probably be attributed to the students' schooling experiences and perceptions of the remedial program. Therefore, a challenge of collegiate remedial education is to develop genuinely successful comprehensive approaches that address the issue of student underpreparedness and the obstacles associated with underpreparedness so that entering college freshmen may gain the skills and behaviors necessary for persistence in higher education attainment. However, according to Shroyer (1980):

there are still university officials and faculty . . . at urban and open admissions colleges around the country, who would like to stand at the entrances to the university during registration each semester and wave away large numbers of developmental [remedial] students whom they feel arrive at the university mistakenly, strayed like . . . pilots years ago, from a course that would properly have taken them elsewhere. (p. 2)

Too often, educators appear to be insensitive to the needs, feelings, and emotions of underprepared students. Researchers produce rigorous evaluations which simply reflect pre and post-programmatic results and which are used later to judge and revise past approaches and create new ones. Little or no attention, then, is directed to the students' experiences and overall treatment while they are enrolled in a remedial program at a postsecondary institution.

Hence, the emotions of underprepared students are reduced to quantifiable measures which do not adequately reflect the depth of students' frustrations, perceptions, and various coping mechanisms. Therefore, based upon the general queries posed in Chapter 1 and within the framework of the design and methodology of this study, I will use data generated from interviews, classroom observations, and

documents to investigate students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a collegiate remedial program. Throughout this chapter, the data will be presented through the voices of age-traditional (18-22 year olds) and one non-traditional underprepared African American college student (25 years of age and older) and African American teachers while they are actively enrolled in at least one remedial class. I examine the classroom environment and the students' responses to the remedial environment to provide an insider's perspective of how students think, feel and respond to their mandatory participation in a collegiate remedial program.

I shall first present the data of significant factors which may directly or indirectly influence students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program. I will later present the findings and appropriate analyses to the question that guided the focus of this study: How do students perceive mandatory participation in a remedial program at an historically Black university?

General Characteristics of the Remedial Program

Because of the University's open admissions policy, the institution devotes considerable resources to various remedial services to help students who come with poor academic preparation. Specifically, the goal of the remedial program is to provide academic support for students who need to strengthen their educational preparation in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as for those students who have been out of the formal school setting for a number of years.

The remedial program or Developmental Studies Program, as it is referred to, operates under the aegis of the Junior Division. All personnel involved in teaching and counseling underprepared students are individuals who have chosen their current assignment and share a mutual commitment to working with underprepared students. The staff consists of a director, five counselors, three writing instructors, three mathematics instructors, and two reading instructors. The class size may range from 20-30 students.

In evaluating the program in terms of participants' progress, achievement is measured through pre and post testing, grade point averages, hours attempted and completed, and reports of the counseling staff. Each teacher assigned to the remedial program is required to provide the program director with a copy of the course syllabus, which outlines objectives, activities, and methods of instruction and evaluation. They are also required to submit a summary of final grades and unit grades for each participant. This assessment procedure shows the degree and rate of progress each participant has made in mastering basic skills.

Placement in Remedial Courses

Students are placed in remedial courses as a result of their performance on placement tests required of all incoming freshmen and transfer students. Students earn three hours credit in these classes but this credit does not apply toward a degree. As indicated in the 1992-1994 University catalog:

The number of hours and quality points earned in Developmental Studies...cannot be used toward degree requirements. However, the hours and quality points will be included in the computation of the semester grade point average. (p. 84)

All diagnostic testing is carried out by the staff of the Junior Division. To test reading ability, students are given the California Achievement Test. Those who score 12th grade or above immediately test out of developmental reading; those who score between the 11th grade and the 11th grade and 9 months are retested during the first week of classes to see if they might make 12th grade or above on a second attempt. And those who score 10.9 or below are placed into Reading 101. For placement in writing classes, the Test of Standard Written (TSWE) is used; students who score between 40 and 50 may test out of developmental (remedial) writing pending their performance on a paragraph writing sample completed at the same time that they take TSWE. Those who score between 35 and 39 on TSWE are retested during the first week of classes to see if they are eligible to move into regular writing sections. Those who score below 35 are placed in Writing 102. Math placement is determined by the Descriptive Test of Math Skills.

Those who score 56 or above are placed in regular math sections; those who score between 49 and 55 are retested in the first week of classes, and those who score below 49 are placed in Mathematics 103. It should be noted that prior to fall, 1987, the instructors of the remedial courses produced their own placement tests; however, based upon an edict issued by the administration of the university during the 1987 fall semester, a series of standardized tests were adopted by the remedial instructors and used for placement. With the departmentally produced test, placement into remedial courses was close to 90% each semester. With the use of standardized tests, the percentage of students placed has been closer to 80%. In addition, at the beginning of the 1990 fall semester, students could qualify for exemption from placement testing if they had a score of 17 in the English/reading section and/or a score of 15 in the mathematics section of the American College Test (ACT). In fact, according to the 1992-94 catalog:

Students may be exempted from placement testing as a result of their scores on the American College Test (ACT). To qualify for exemption, students must present a copy of their ACT scores to counselors at Orientation. Exemption scores

are set by the Division. Exemptions are granted only upon documented copies of the scores.
(p. 83)

Once placed in remedial courses, students are given a curriculum which follows as much as possible the concepts of mastery learning which encourage a systematic design of instruction. This approach affords the instructors the opportunity to divide the skills to be learned into subskills, and the content into modules which can be pursued at a varied pace by the individual student. The underlying strategy is to present several skill development sequences arranged in graduated learning steps from simple to complex (Roueche & Snow, 1979). For example, the course description for remedial writing states that it is designed to teach "the mastery of the sentence . . . with emphasis on grammar and usage as they relate to sentence structure." The remedial reading course "helps students improve their vocabulary and their study and reading skills." And the mathematics course is "intended to prepare students for the study of college algebra [by offering] a review and reinforcement of previous mathematics learning." Students receive a detailed description (course

outline) of steps necessary for successful completion of any remedial course. The outline clearly delineates the actions they must take to satisfy course requirements.

Grading Policy

To exit each course, students take the same examination that was used for placement, and they must make the same required scores (listed above) which allowed placement in the regular curriculum. Students may also receive an NC grade (no credit) which allows them to continue their work in the subsequent semester, although only one NC grade is allowed a student. After that, they must receive a pass (A,B,or C) or fail (F). This policy is clearly stated in the 1989-1992 and 1992-1994 University catalogs:

Students in these programs [remedial] may earn grades of A, B, C, or NC. Students earning an NC grade will be allowed to enroll in the course the following semester, without penalty of failure. If, after the second semester of enrollment, the student does not satisfactorily complete the course requirements, the student will receive a grade of F. (p. 74; p. 84)

The NC policy is necessary because a majority of the students require two semesters to reach the required skill level to exit the remedial courses.

Although entering freshman students often enroll in 16 to 18 hours of coursework, the remedial participants are generally limited to a maximum of 13-14 hours which may include 9 hours of remedial courses and 4 or 5 hours of required freshman courses. A typical schedule for a remedial participant is as follows:

<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Hours Credit</u>
Reading 101	3
Writing 102	3
Mathematics 103	3
Freshman Seminar	1
Physical Education	1
Art, Health, or Music	<u>2</u>
	13

Such a program suggests that participants cannot reasonably expect to graduate within four years. A majority of the students require two semesters to reach the required skill level to exit the remedial courses.

Counseling

To address the concerns and/or feelings of underprepared students, the Developmental Studies Program is complemented by a comprehensive counseling program. This program component is designed to provide specific services to assist entering and

transfer students in their transition from high school as well as other colleges/universities to the University. To attain this goal, a minimum of three counseling sessions per participant, are conducted each semester. These counseling sessions are usually designed to assist students as follows:

1. to clarify their values;
2. to gain understanding of their strengths and weaknesses;
3. to take responsibility for structuring the quality of their lives;
4. to define or redefine their goals and objectives;
5. to develop decision-making skills; and
6. to continuously evaluate the direction in which their lives are progressing.

(University Catalog, 1992-1994, p. 84)

According to the Annual Report of the Junior Division (1990), "the factors that contribute to the success of the . . . programs are well organized and tightly structured classes. These highly structured programs help students who have had limited academic success" (p. 26).

The next section provides an examination of how the program objectives are interpreted and translated into learning experiences and structure established for students enrolled in remedial reading at the institution.

The Remedial Reading Program

Once students have been assigned to the remedial reading program as a result of their performance on the entrance exams, they must enroll in Developmental Reading 101. This course is designed to help students improve their literal, inferential, and critical comprehension, increase their vocabularies, and develop study skills and habits which will ultimately lead to academic success. To accomplish this goal, the course content is divided into two basic skill clusters--vocabulary and comprehension--which are subdivided into additional skills.

Skill Cluster I (Vocabulary Skills) is subdivided into the following subskills: context clues, prefixes, roots, and suffixes. The instructors teach these skills by utilizing a variety of instructional materials, such as books, worksheets, selected reading passages and teacher-made timed tests. In teaching the subskills, the instructors require the students to purchase Guide to College Reading (Second Edition) and Vocabulary Foundations for the College Student. These textbooks are primarily used for drill and practice outside of the classroom. The students are assigned

approximately 25-30 pages, per textbook, each week. The instructor reviews a few of the words each class period through storytelling which may include myths, parables, Shakespeare, classical tales, and even personal experiences. The students are often so engrossed in her storytelling that they are eager to hear more or share their own experiences or perceptions of a given story. The instructor assumes the role of guide or coach as she encourages them to use the vocabulary words in their dialogue.

In the classroom, the teacher usually disseminates passages from selected short stories, magazine articles, newspapers, paperbacks and other written documents. The passages usually address global, economic, and social issues that are germane to young adults, minorities, senior citizens, and diverse cultures, such as, healthcare, small businesses, dental hygiene, local cuisine, headaches, auto industry, and the like.

Each student is responsible for underlining all words which are unfamiliar to her or him. The students must then determine the meaning of the words based upon context clues; with this approach, the

word list varies from student to student. In an oral exercise, students are asked to identify their words and generate sentences, synonyms, and antonyms to demonstrate their understanding of new words based on context clues. The teacher facilitates this activity while students critique the work of their peers. During their critiques or informal conversations, the instructor encourages the students to utilize new words from the passages and/or textbooks. To augment this effort, students are allowed to use Roget's College Thesaurus in Dictionary Form and The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language which are required books for the class.

In an effort to increase students' vocabulary skills, teachers concentrate not only on words elucidated in the passages or class assignments, but they distribute handouts with emphasis on enlarging vocabulary through Anglo-Saxon prefixes, Latin prefixes, Latin roots, Greek word elements and suffixes. All handouts are discussed in class with students encouraged to identify words in their textbooks or "everyday speech" which may contain some of the prefixes, suffixes and roots discussed in

class. After sufficient drill, practice, and discussion of each category, students are then administered timed vocabulary tests that may range from 8-18 minutes. The results of the test are often used to reteach certain skills which may not have been mastered and to highlight pertinent test-taking strategies. Prior to the timed tests, students are given a study guide to assist them with their review.

Skill Cluster II (Comprehension Skills) is presented in a similar manner. This cluster includes: literal comprehension (main ideas, supporting details, and paragraph patterns); inferential comprehension (inference, conclusions, predicting outcomes, judgments, generalizations, character analysis, author's purpose and point of view, author's mood, style, and tone); and critical comprehension (fact vs opinion, propaganda, persuasion). For literal and inferential comprehension skills, however, students are assigned different passages and activities to respond to questions which are literal, inferential, and critical in nature. In most instances, the students are allowed to choose stories and passages from books available in the classroom. The instructor

monitors their progress by requiring students to complete certain teacher-made assessment forms to ascertain their mastery of certain skills.

Occasionally, the instructor requires all students to read the same passages to facilitate group discussions and assist in the development of specific skills.

During the time of this study, the passages included excerpts from the following: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou; "A Slave Witness of a Slave Auction" by Solomon Northrup; "Sympathy" by Paul Lawrence Dunbar; "My Greatest Adventure" by Bill Cosby; and The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley (required book). The supplementary reading materials also included articles from the local newspaper, Newsweek, editorials, and editorial pictures.

Prior to the discussion of the selected passages and reading assignments, students are given study guides to assist them with their reading. Upon the completion of different passages and the teaching of the various comprehension skills, students are administered unit tests, which are accompanied by teacher-made timed tests, to ascertain their levels of

mastery. Students are required to pass seven unit tests with 80% proficiency.

Although the class is designed to allow students to proceed at their own pace through the reading materials, the structure of the course does not allow for any variance on means or ends. Specifically, the students perform the same tasks at one time or another in order to learn a prearranged set of vocabulary words and reading skills. For example:

VF: Vocabulary Foundations for the College Student

GCR: Guide to College Reading (Second Edition)
January 19-22 Orientation to Developmental
Reading 101

VF: Learning New Words from the Context pp. 1-28

GCR: Using Context Clues pp. 1-11
Learning New Words pp. 30-45
January 25-29

VF: Learning New Words from the Context pp. 1-54

GCR: Recognizing the Structure of Words pp. 15-29
Learning New Words pp. 30-45
Making Your Skills Work
Together pp. 47-49
February 1-5 Review/Tests

VF: Context Clues pp. 1-54
Tests - February 4-5
(Course Outline, 1993)

According to the referenced outline, there is no differentiation on where students are directed or how

they get there; only the time and rate at which they perform all the activities vary. At the beginning of the semester, additional parameters are also communicated to the students as follows:

1. In addition to the six major tests, your instructors reserve the right to test or quiz throughout the semester with or without previous notification.
2. Reminder: The expected level of proficiency on each unit test is 80%. That is, to take the post-test you must make 80% on all of your unit tests.
3. Take advantage of the reading practice exercises provided on pp. 303-472 in your Guide to College Reading.
4. Read newspapers and magazines daily; the frequent encounter with language and ideas will make the difference in your reading proficiency.

According to Roueche and Armes (1983), this "careful structure is the linchpin of effective teaching because it formalizes expectations, making clear that the instructor will insist upon hard work in his class" (p. 18). Since expectations are presented in such a manner, instructors assist students in acquiring the mental and emotional discipline to face the challenges of academic rigor at the university in general and the remedial program in particular as indicated by Toya, Kya, and Toni:

Toya: I started improving my faults. I knew the material, but there's never enough education, so I just kept reviewing and reviewing.

Kya: In our reading class and our writing class, the instructors go over what we have to do.

Toni: . . . if we have a test Thursday, well, she's not going to tell me Tuesday. She's going to tell me the Tuesday ahead and prepare me with this study guide. . . . She gives me all kinds of worksheets with the words on it--whatever. So, that's why I feel successful. . . . Well, when I thought about reading, I thought I was going to get in front of the class and read this story. I know I can read aloud, but I know I'm not going to project my voice . . . I just thought it was that, but now come to find out it is vocabulary, comprehension, and so on and so forth. You really have to work in the class and apply yourself and not just read aloud.

In the next section I provide an overview of a remedial classroom environment which supports the structure of the program and fosters the notion of hard work.

The Classroom Environment

Upon close observation of the classroom environment, it appears that the reading laboratory has been modified to accommodate the instructional activities for students enrolled in the remedial reading program. The remedial reading classroom is

void of the regular student desks and chalkboard; instead, students enter a classroom environment which is replete with rectangular tables and chairs, individual study carrels, and several bookcases which are situated in the middle of the classroom. It is obvious that the bookcases are used to provide a line of demarcation since two classes are sometimes offered during the same designated time periods. In addition, the study carrels are positioned a few feet from the rear of the classroom wall to cordon off additional space. The instructors utilize this space as an office area, which contains a long rectangular table and several chairs, wall cabinets, and several file cabinets. According to the instructors, this arrangement affords them the opportunity to be accessible to students who desire additional tutoring or drill and practice. The arrangement of the furniture clearly indicates three distinct areas, which serve to reinforce the structure of the program.

In regard to instructional activities, the instructor begins the class as promptly as possible since "the class is short and every minute counts." One female student often affirms this statement by

commenting, "Dang, this class seems to go faster than my 50 minutes in the other classes." (The remedial class is one hour and 15 minutes). Students are engaged in numerous activities during the entire class period, such as whole group, small group, and individual instruction.

Although the faculty and staff of the remedial program may profess to have tightly structured classes which contribute to the success of the students, it is ultimately what the student believes that counts, for:

An atmosphere of working together toward success can ward off a sense of failure. As students discover that they need skill in reading in order to reach their goals, they become motivated to learn. (Piepmeir, 1987, p. 69)

Research clearly indicates that the quality of the student's response to the learning environment and her/his ability to become a functioning member of a learning group may be evaluated by how well the individual is valued and recognized by the instructor (Astin, 1993; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Rist, 1970; Roueche & Armes, 1983). The impact of the students' perceived worth is clearly reflected in their assessments of the learning environment.

Two students perceive the learning environment as a partnership:

Cora: Let everyone get involved. It is a joint effort; it is not an individual effort. Everyone is here for the same purpose, and that's to get an education. Instructors learn daily from students and students learn daily from instructors. Everybody brings something different to the classroom . . . and you just learn from their experiences, even the teachers.

Carl: It doesn't matter who I get. I am really not a person who says you should take her because she is the easiest. I am this way--whoever I get that's who I am going to learn from because we are both here for the same purpose. She is here to teach, and I am here to learn.

Another female student attributes her positive attitude and success in the classroom to the teacher and her teaching style. Moreover, as indicated by Toni, students respond positively in an environment where they are able to discern the goals for which they are striving and recognize the instructor as their guide toward those goals (Roueche & Baker, 1985). This perception of the instructor is clearly articulated as follows:

Toni: I have a different attitude this semester, and I think it has a lot to do with my teacher and the way she teaches because I didn't take the same lady I took last semester. . . . I mean it's like . . .

she puts focus on you . . . like do this, and she doesn't spoon feed me . . . She's going to tell me the Tuesday ahead and prepare me with a study guide. She's going over the work in class and I'm doing my homework...things like that. It wasn't like I was just on my own--out in the world by myself.

Similarly, Roueche and Armes (1983) indicate that students need " 'disciplined caring'; they need to meet instructors who pay attention to them, who stay with them through the early tentative steps of the learning exchange" (p. 19). Toni, Greg, Jan, and Toya identified this disciplined caring as a significant part of the remedial environment. For example:

Toni: They expect you to be adults, but then they will hold your hand. All right, in the beginning of the semester, they will hold your hand and let you go on and let you go. And right now I am walking by myself and I really feel strong and I don't feel like I am going to fall and I am not even looking back.

Greg: I feel as though it is the instructor who helps you a lot; she helps you a lot. I mean she don't let you stay stuck on one thing that you can't understand right away. She helps you to progress in the things that you are doing.

Jan: Here, I find the work is more independent. They help you at first, and then they tell you that you're on your own. They push you to do the work. If you do the work, fine, and if you don't that's on you. They remind you all the time how it's on you.

Toya: The instructor is really something. She makes you feel special...like you're somebody. The students who are around aren't feeling all low that they're in a remedial class. . . . You really want to do something.

These four students perceive their classroom environment as one where the instructor has both a nurturing attitude and the ability or willingness to encourage independence in the remedial students. Apparently, the instructor communicates a belief that students can do the work, and students develop a sense of responsibility for the instructor's high expectations (Easton, Forrest, Goldman, & Ludwig, 1984). This is evident in the students' comments, such as:

They remind you all the time how it's on you. You really want to do something. She helps you to progress.

In keeping with the notion of a nurturing environment and disciplined caring, instructors also build a community of support by listening carefully when students speak, for: "If students sense questions are an annoyance . . . they will quit asking and the beginning of dialogue is dead" (Roueche & Armes, 1983, p. 19). Presumably, the remedial

classroom environment encourages questions and dialogue in a non-threatening fashion. In fact, several students identified the classroom as having a comfortable environment where they felt free to ask questions:

Brad: The teachers really care. They help you when you ask a question. You just have to ask a question. You really don't feel scared when you need to ask a question.

Cora: Basically, I wouldn't change nothing in my classroom because I feel comfortable with it, and you learn something every day. All you need to do is ask questions, and I do--I definitely do.

Ray: Honestly, I feel comfortable with the class already. I probably can ask her a certain question at any time, and when I feel comfortable with something, I stick with it from start to finish, so I plan to stick with it.

Toni: I feel really good about my class because I feel like my teacher is not only my teacher; she's my friend. I can tell her that I am having problems with this and that and I ask her if I can meet with her in her office, or can we do this; can we do that? I ask all sorts of questions. She gives me all kinds of worksheets with the words on it--whatever. So that's why I feel comfortable or even satisfied with my class.

Donna: I think she's [instructor] okay. She asks us a lot of questions, and we ask her questions too . . . I always have questions.

Just as students have a sense of comfort in the remedial classroom environment and view the instructor as a "friend," others may discern the environment as one that "satisfies no expectations and shatters many illusions. This experience may be characterized as one of frustration, deprivation, and threatening to self-esteem" (Guinta, Bonifacio, & McVey, 1987, p. 22). In the view of some students, what happens to them in the learning process or the classroom is not the result of their own effort. Perhaps, this is best illustrated in Kya's response to her remedial environment:

Kya: In our reading and writing classes, the instructor goes over what we have to do. They bring you all the way back to the beginning like you didn't learn anything in high school. If I didn't learn anything in high school, how did I get out of high school? It was very hard in our high school. They stayed on us. You couldn't get away with nothing. I couldn't even work until my senior year of school, cause I was so up into the books. They made sure you had to work every day. Every single day that you came to the school you had work to do. That's how I was pushed. You had work, and you turned it in, and they'd go over it. If it was wrong, they'd go over it again. It was a pushy thing. It's not that I want to be spoon-fed, but give me some kind of feedback. Don't treat me like I am in first grade and don't know nothing.

Such frustrations, as indicated by Kya, disrupt the ability to learn while simultaneously creating an anxiety level which distorts a student's perceptions of the classroom environment (Roueche & Mink, 1982; Seligman, 1975). Despite the frustrations, the student seems to intuitively realize that "spoon-fed" knowledge devalues both the teacher's role and the structured learning experiences, for "spoon-fed success in a course will undermine any attempt to structure learning" (Roueche & Armes, 1983, p.18).

Within the setting of the remedial classroom, the data generated from student interviews seem to indicate strong linkages between the student's view of the learning environment and satisfaction with faculty. In almost all instances, student's opinions of the classroom environment were definitely influenced by the teaching/learning practices and the perceived faculty interest in students. Hence, academic development in the remedial classroom seems to be facilitated by instructors who require students to become actively involved in the learning environment and assume "a good deal of initiative in enhancing their own learning" (Astin, 1993, p. 38).

This is clearly articulated by Kya, Jan, Ray, and

Cora:

Kya: We do 95% of the work ourselves, but that 5% is where we need to be pushed. If I don't know it, how am I going to do it?

Jan: Here, I find the work is more independent. They push you to do the work. If you do the work fine, and if you don't, that's on you.

Ray: Her teaching style is unique and everything, but I feel as though it is not the teacher; it is the person. You have to really want to learn. I feel better about myself now. I am really trying harder.

Cora: I feel I should strive as an individual...every person is his own person so it's his decision on what he wants to do with his life or their lives. No one can really make us learn but us. . . . The teacher teaches you, but she lets you teach yourself. . . It's all up to you.

The attitude of the instructor, then, appears to have significant impact on the classroom environment. In the next section I will explore general characteristics and expectations of instructors who are assigned to teach in the remedial program.

Characteristics of Instructors

According to Roueche and Kirk (1973), the instructor assigned to the remedial programs is:

most likely a 'volunteer'--that is, he [she] requested the position. He [She] is teaching these students because he [she] believes they are capable of achieving. Perhaps most important, today's instructor cares about his [her] students--openly and unabashedly cares! (p. 8)

The two instructors assigned to the remedial reading program "volunteered" for their current positions.

Mrs. Morgan accepted her position at the University after having taught English on the secondary level for 20 years in the local urban school system.

DBS: After having worked in an academic setting such as Benjamin Franklin, a school for the academically gifted, what motivated you to seek employment at the University as an instructor in the remedial reading program?

Morgan: I thought that my talents would be better served and that I could work better with young people who needed additional instruction that went beyond the given assignments and the collection of assignments because teaching kids who had problems was a greater challenge, a greater personal challenge for me.

DBS: Do you feel that anything in your past or training influenced your decision?

Morgan: I would think about everything because if I remember the elementary school that I attended, well, it was a family environment kind of school. That was the same for high school. It was a

small community; everybody knew each other, and there was a high level of parent participation and support.

DBS: Is this something that you felt was needed in a remedial program?

Morgan: I think it is needed in order to participate. I wanted to bring that kind of background back to the remedial classroom.

Similarly, Mrs. Day sought employment at the University after having taught for "many years as an elementary teacher" and seven (7) years as a resource teacher.

DBS: What motivated you to seek employment as a reading instructor in the remedial program at the University?

Day: I was awarded an experienced teaching fellowship to attend Loyola University where I finished getting my masters degree. Individuals who participated in this program were selected from 500 applicants. The program was geared at working with minorities. After completing that, I went back to Loyola and University of New Orleans (UNO) and completed 30 hours above the masters in special education with emphasis on mental retardation and learning disabilities. After that, I continued to work with the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at UNO in linguistics and further education in reading. At this point, I decided that I could utilize my training best by teaching remedial reading at the University.

DBS: What led you to the University?

Day: When I was a resource teacher, I had two tutors whom I would help on various things. Apparently, I was recommended by the two tutors to the Evening Division Director around that time. I then worked part-time for one year. After that experience, I then pursued a full-time position in the remedial program, and the rest is history. I observed that a lot of the students were never taught or never learned the skills involved or needed for reading.

DBS: What influenced your teaching?

Day: Since I was a former elementary teacher, as well as being trained in learning disabilities, I tried to work out specific steps that would help me to understand first and then develop some appropriate techniques or strategies to help these students learn to read.

In addition to both instructors "volunteering" to teach in the remedial program, both have had years of teaching experiences in the urban school district and appear to be teachers who know how to teach skills and are sensitive to the psychological and emotional needs of underprepared students (Joffe, 1970), as exemplified by Mrs. Morgan in the following vignette:

The remedial reading class at the University begins with Mrs. Morgan addressing the class with a warm smile and a French greeting, "bon jour" (good day). Some students respond with the same phrase; others provide a rather robust "good afternoon," and some do not respond at all. Mrs. Morgan positions herself at the overhead

projector which is situated in the middle of her side of the laboratory where students sit around tables and at carrels located along the wall. Mrs. Morgan peers out over her reading glasses to make eye contact with each member of the class, as if to place them in a state of readiness. She begins the activities by identifying the objectives for the class period which are projected on the wall from the overhead projector. Instead of the typical monotone lecture at the front of the classroom, Mrs. Morgan presents information in a conversational tone as she meanders through the classroom. Once in a while, she sits at a table with the students, if there is a vacant chair. Whenever possible, she includes personal experiences and encourages the students to do the same. For example, on one occasion she posed the following question: "What has aroused your interest or motivated you to want to read?" One male student responds: "That's a good question." Everybody laughs. Mrs. Morgan laughs with them, but quickly gets the class to focus on the question by relating how her own interest in reading began. She begins her personal account with a careful and dramatic articulation of the word, "Amontillado! Amontillado?" The students look at her with such expectancy because they know from previous experiences that she is about to share one of her countless stories. Mrs. Morgan continues with a dramatic and skillfully articulated presentation of the story. She changes her voice and posture to indicate the personality of each character. You can almost feel the excitement that she felt when she read the story for the first time. Every student appeared to be spellbound by her presentation, including myself. At the end of her summary, she abruptly returns to the activity scheduled for that day. One student quickly interrupts and says, "What's the name of that story?" Mrs. Morgan smiles and says "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe; she writes it on the overhead transparency. Several students copy the information. Mrs. Morgan then proceeds with a discussion on revenge and acts of violence. She

introduces several vocabulary words and students and instructor discuss reading assignment for the class period. (Fieldnotes, 1992)

Among other favorable traits, both instructors are doers, are self-confident, believe in the significance of what they do, and are cognizant that "professional excellence ultimately comes with self-examination" (Quoted in Gabriel, 1987, p. 1). This is probably best exemplified in Morgan's comment on preparation:

DBS: What kind of preparation have you had in teaching reading?

Morgan: I think the best preparation has been that I am a lifelong reader. I love to read; I love to gather information. I enjoy language.

For Morgan and Day, "there is no line between work and play: teaching is a joy" (Gabriel, 1987, p. 4). This is probably most evident in their relaxed classroom atmosphere and their willingness to continue employment in a remedial program for over ten years. In the next section I will address the teachers' expectations of students who enroll in remedial reading classes at the University and how their expectations impact students' perceptions of mandatory participation in a remedial program.

Many entering freshmen are academically underprepared as a result of attending elementary and secondary schools in which keeping order superseded instruction. Moreover, these students have been turned off by traditional approaches that emphasize the authoritarian role of the teacher or teacher-centered instruction, for example:

- Carl: I feel like if I hadn't clowned around a lot that I would probably be in my regular classes. I thought college would be just like high school. I thought it would be an easy get away with no homework. I thought I would take notes and just listen to the teacher talk. All of those things catch up with you.
- Jan: In high school the teachers do everything for you. All you need to do is go to school. The troublemakers get the most attention. I just listened.
- Toni: I never failed a class at school, but I always did enough to pass. I never really did much. I am not slow or anything. I just didn't do my work really.
- Cora: Well, honestly, when I was in high school, I used to think the class was boring . . . the teacher was boring, so I found something else to do. I would just sleep, look out the window or whatever.

According to these students, they have been subjected to educational experiences which have

fostered passivity and a sense of learned helplessness. Morgan and Day corroborate these findings with the following comments:

DBS: What do you see to be the greatest need of the students?

Day: . . . They didn't totally master the skills at the time when it was presented to them in elementary school. I don't mean that they were not exposed, but, perhaps, it was the way they were taught. They didn't receive enough practice or review or reinforcement or whatever it was to really become skilled in using certain strategies.

DBS: How would you describe your classroom environment and the students' interactions with you?

Day: I've had some classes where everyone seems to be inhibited and don't really try. It doesn't seem that there is anything that I can do initially to make them open up.

DBS: How do you perceive the students enrolled in your classes?

Morgan: When I first came to the University, I think that the students were better prepared even if the scores didn't reflect it. They had a better attitude towards learning and a better attitude towards accepting instruction. . . . Students now seem to reject instruction; they are more interested in a quick fix. They seem to believe that the teachers here are withholding the trick that would make it very easy, and I don't really believe that the

students today are well prepared. And there are no good tricks.

DBS: How would you describe the environment of your classroom?

Morgan: Open, I tell them to feel welcome, at home. . . . There's no need for the authoritarian situation at this point.

Although a large number of students may have juggled personal and work schedules, gone to considerable trouble to enroll in entering freshman courses, and paid hard earned money or secured loans and/or grants, it is still apparent that a significant percentage of these students, who obviously want to be in the collegial setting, are not psychologically prepared to try (Ogbu, 1978). Toni, Ray, and Brad are confronting similar challenges:

Toni: When I first thought about college, I thought it was a joke. I went out into the real world flipping burgers. Now, I have kids, a job, and now I have to be back in college. And I could have had a career and everything by now. But, I took it as a joke, so get it while you can.

Ray: I'm into fast foods, right now. I am at Taco Bell, and that's where I've been since I graduated from school. I now go to work and school. It's rough, but I'm hanging.

Brad: I work, and I have a real short school schedule, and trying to fit in morning classes is hard. I caught hell this

semester. I don't want to go through this again.

Hodges (1986) suggests expectancy value theory as the solution to helping academically underprepared students circumvent the learned helplessness syndrome in the classroom. He posits that these students will work if they believe that their efforts will lead to results, that the results will yield rewards, and that the rewards will indeed be valuable. This is corroborated in Toya's statement:

Toya: Okay! At first, I really didn't work hard, but I looked in the catalog and saw what my next course required and what was going to be taught. They were teaching exactly what we needed to learn for the next courses, so I started taking heed and really started paying attention. I started improving my faults.

The expectancy value theory appears to be the underlying theory of the expectations espoused by Day and Morgan. Both expressed their expectations in terms of possible benefits or rewards for the students. For example:

DBS: What are you ultimately preparing your students for in this class?

Day: Well, really to do better in whatever they are doing. For instance, if they complete college or not, they will be better people just because they have

learned to read better; they have learned to think more critically, and they have learned to get something out of reading. To learn how to seek information, to me, will make a difference whether or not the students get a B.S. degree or not. If I see a change in their attitude towards learning, in general, and a change in their thinking is success because from then on that person can truly do the rest by himself or herself without me.

DBS: Why are you trying to give the students an alternative approach to learning versus an authoritarian one?

Morgan: I think one of our goals is independent work. I would like them to realize that they are mature, independent learners. I would like them to become less teacher dependent. As independent workers, they can learn more in a shorter period of time.

DBS: I've noticed that you incorporate a lot of African American selections in your reading assignments. How does that impact the environment or your teaching?

Morgan: I would hope that would serve as motivation, that they would be able to identify with the writer, that they would find a common thrust, that they would understand where the writer is coming from, that they would understand the language, and to be better able to relate more closely to the authors and their experiences.

DBS: What do you ultimately see yourself preparing the students for in this class?

Morgan: Hopefully, for life. I tell them if you ever become interested and curious about what goes on in the world you'll never know another day of boredom.

DBS: How then would you define success or the influence of your expectations?

Morgan: If they tell me that yes, they are readers, and that they are participating citizens, well, that's my success. I really hope to influence them in that manner.

In sum, Day and Morgan have expectations that seem to be grounded in the expectancy value theory. Both instructors see their roles as preparing students for life rather than just simply addressing the academic deficiencies of their students. The instructors recognize the need or value of an approach that encourages intellectual inquiry, independent learning and effective citizens which will eventually lead to positive outcomes for all involved in the learning experiences.

The value of the learning experiences in the remedial reading classroom is articulated to the students by the teacher throughout the semester as a natural or expected outcome of the students' participation. For instance:

You know why you are here. You process some things slowly, and you need a command of the vocabulary to be more effective.

You should read your course syllabus at least twice a week to know and understand the goals of the course.

We want you to have a powerful and very broad-based vocabulary.

Well, you know that they try to trick you [reference to standardized tests], and what we try to do is show you how the tricks are coming at you.

You've got to let your minds go. I want you to be astute students. I want you to write this down. I want you to know what kind of student I want you to be.

You are going to learn through your reading. You learn your best reading beyond the classroom.

Think about this today: What is an educated person? What abilities and capabilities will I possess four years from now?

Most of us need to know how to operate without distractions; learning how to focus is what you need.

Don't waste time looking back at your past. You are no longer in high school and there is a certain level you are trying to achieve. The greatest number of words you know could mean the more money you make.

Your very intelligence is at stake; your earning power is at stake. You'll be able to make stronger decisions about life.

You learn by doing. If you are willing to work at it, the pieces will fall into place.

The University schedule provides you with learning time; you are learning how to become independent learners. I simply make recommendations; I have no pills, no potions to make you learn. (Fieldnotes, 1992)

The impact of the referenced statements and the students' perceptions of the teachers' expectations are probably best summarized by Roueche and Armes (1983):

Whether you speak of authority figures or examples or role models, students do reflect back what they see and hear. They give back enthusiasm when they experience it. They place higher expectations on themselves if they sense high expectations from the instructor. If the teacher comes to class on time, if he is prepared, if he seeks to understand the complexity of content, if he values discovery, his students are much more likely to emulate that behavior. Instructors are powerful models for good or bad. (p. 19)

In sum, the teacher's expectations of underprepared students may, in fact, have a potent influence on the actual performance of those students. Hence, both Morgan and Day recognize the need for high expectations in their classes:

DBS: Have you ever had a semester where you felt that you didn't accomplish much?

Morgan: All of them. I feel that I never accomplish what I set out to do. I guess I have high ideals. I have to have that. The goals have to be high. . . .

DBS: What about your expectations?

Day: I feel that I have to go beyond what's expected to discover everybody's potential.

Similarly, Day acknowledges the impact of her high expectations by alluding to the comments of one student:

DBS: How do you perceive your role in the classroom?

Day: Well, as one [student] said the other day, and this is his second time in the class, 'I really have to say that you force people to do their best.'

DBS: Is that in an appreciative manner?

Day: Yes, yes. He seemed to be very appreciative about it, but he did say, 'You really do force people to do their best in here.'

Whether the students perceive the remedial experiences as being either negative or positive is a crucial undertaking of this research. The manner in which students view mandatory participation in a remedial program is reflected in their interpretations of the program, activities, environment, and the instructors. In the next section I provide the framework for understanding the needs, frustrations and perceptions of underprepared students through the

following themes generated from student interviews:
mandatory testing, perceptions of participation,
program identification, implicit messages, and
perceived benefits.

Mandatory Participation

Mandatory Testing

Blackwell (1981) asserts that opponents of the remedial programs consider them discriminatory, unconstitutional, and stigmatizing or demeaning to minorities. These opponents are unwilling to accept the notion that these remedial programs are morally justified and educationally sound because they make allowances for persisting racism against minorities, for discriminatory grading practices, and for test biases that help to lower the achievement of minority students on these measures. Similarly, Cohen and Brawer (1981) maintain:

Selective admissions to any program is as discriminatory as it is justifiable. Regardless of the yardstick applied, the people who are shut out of the program in which they want to enroll have been discriminated against. (p. 33)

Underprepared students, who participated in this research project, expressed similar concerns regarding

mandatory assessment which ultimately led to mandatory placement in the remedial program:

- DBS: How do you feel about the required testing to assess whether you need remedial courses or not?
- Jan: I think that should change. You should be allowed to take the test a second time in order to bring your score up, if you need it. It's unfair to have everything count on that one time.
- DBS: Would you like to make some closing remarks?
- Toya: . . . I feel that the requirement for taking Developmental Studies [remedial courses], well, I don't like it at all based on your ACTs. Some people do not test well, and some people cannot take standardized tests and are just as smart as possible. I think it should be something written or an interview.
- DBS: How do you see your participation in the remedial program here. Do you see it as something that's assisting you with your education?
- Kya: Some people, like me, aren't good at standardized tests. I can take a test on a sheet of paper and pass it, but that's when I'm writing it down and looking over it. But on a standardized test, I'm just writing a,b,c,d. I really write out my answers better.
- DBS: How were you placed in the remedial courses?
- Kya: Through the test . . . It's the standardized test they give all of us. I'm not very good at it, so I don't

think they should place you in those classes based on that. . . .

DBS: If you could change one component of mandatory participation in the remedial program, what would you change?

Brad: . . . I'd leave it up to the individual as to whether or not upon entry they would go to remedial courses or not. No one knows like you whether you can make it or not. If I had made the decision, I would have taken the remedial courses, but I didn't have the choice. The decision was made for me. . . .

DBS: When you first came to . . . , did you feel that you would have to take any remedial courses at all?

Donna: I think testing is really on the individual. You just have to know how to take tests.

DBS: How do you feel about the tests that were used to place you in the remedial program?

Greg: I didn't think too much about it.

DBS: Why not?

Greg: I've taken a lot of tests . . . standardized tests, and I know I don't do good on them. I knew I would have to take all 3 remedials.

DBS: How did you feel about taking the placement tests?

Carl: I didn't care.

DBS: Why?

- Carl: I knew I had to take them, so I really didn't have a choice.
- DBS: What would you change about mandatory participation in a remedial program?
- Cora: What do you mean?
- DBS: Are there any requirements or any part of it that you would change?
- Cora: Definitely the test. It was too long, and I was too tired. I don't think it showed everything I know.
- DBS: How do you feel about having had to take placement tests?
- Toni: I didn't think it was necessary.
- DBS: Why?
- Toni: They already had a copy of my high school grades and a copy of my ACT scores. If they was going to put me in the remedials, they should of just done it. I didn't need to waste my time taking more tests. I didn't have a choice.
- DBS: What kind of choice?
- Toni: I couldn't pick my classes. I had to take the remedials. The test was something they used to say, yes, you need these classes.
- DBS: How do you feel about having to take placement tests?
- Ray: Do you mean the tests we took at the beginning of the semester?
- DBS: Yes.

Ray: I knew I was going to take something.
I just didn't think the test showed all
I know and learned. I knew I would
have to take one remedial class, but
maybe all three.

These underprepared students seem to experience some difficulty in assigning any worthwhile value to the standardized placement tests. Most perceive themselves as being trapped with no options; in fact, they were shut out of the regular freshman courses.

It is, perhaps, this shutting out that caused Trow (1983) to view the freshman year in two distinct ways. He posits that the freshman year is one used for screening out those who are simply unable to do postsecondary work--the "notorious slaughter of the innocents" (p. 21). He also indicates that, for those freshmen who remain in college, it is a year for "remedying the academic deficiencies they brought with them from high school" (p. 21); in fact, it conveys the image of affording students a second chance (Roueche, 1968). Skeptics contend, however, that remedial programs simply keep underprepared students in college and do not contribute to the students' career development or academic progress, for "students who are 'herded' into remedial courses without

explanation are less likely to be successful"

(Southern Regional Educational Board, 1983, p.5).

Obviously, remedial education is an emotional topic which is viewed with much ambivalence by researchers and university faculty. In the next section, however, I indicate how remedial education is an emotional topic for the participants.

Perceptions of Participation

The students, however, are no different. According to Bers (1987), "students are bewildered, having been admitted to college and then told they lack college-level skills" (p. 8). Students who participated in this research project expressed this bewilderment:

DBS: How did you feel at registration when you found out that you had to take three remedial classes?

Jan: I was angry. I was very, very angry and upset.

DBS: How did you feel when you came to ... and had to enroll in remedial classes?

Kya: I was shocked. I wasn't too fond of that because the classes I took at Prep covered all of that. I was truly taught in my classes at school.

DBS: What about your enthusiasm for school right now?

- Kya: I was excited about school in the beginning, but now, I'm lacking, and I really don't know what I want to do now. . . .
- DBS: How do you feel about being required to participate in a remedial program?
- Brad: I was uncomfortable in the beginning cause I didn't know just how much I needed to learn, or how much I didn't need.
- DBS: How did you feel about taking all three remedial courses?
- Cora: Well, at first, when I came, you have that feeling that 'wow' I wasn't as prepared as I thought. . . .
- DBS: How did you feel when you realized these were skills that you had already mastered?
- Donna: At first, I was a little intimidated, but I said if I show them this is too easy, then they'll say you can test out and go to your regular courses. That didn't happen. I couldn't get into a regular English course until I passed writing or reading.
- DBS: How did you feel when you were told that you had to enroll in all three remedial courses?
- Greg: Well, at first, it didn't bother me cause I thought I really had it made . . . I thought I was ready for this. I don't know what happened.
- DBS: How did you feel when you were mandated to take the remedial courses?
- Toni: What?

DBS: How did you feel when you realized you had to take remedial courses.

Toni: To tell you the truth, I couldn't believe it. I asked the lady if I could see my scores. I know I wasn't the best student in school, but hey, I wasn't the worst either. I just could not believe it.

DBS: How did you feel about being placed in the remedial program?

Toya: Well, maybe reading, but I really didn't need the other two. I don't know what kind of scores they were using.

Obviously, the students genuinely believe that they are prepared for and actually capable of doing appropriate college-level work; therefore, they encounter "the classroom experience as one that satisfies no expectations and shatters many illusions" (Guinta, Bonifacio, & McVey, 1987, p. 22). In fact, some of the students perceive their participation in the remedial program as a needless imposition or roadblock which they must overcome to attain their educational goals:

DBS: How do you feel about participating in the remedial program?

Donna: Remedial classes, classes that you pay for, but there's no college credit in them. It's just another obstacle to set you back, and you're going to be in college until you're 90. That was my

first mind, but after I got into it, my opinions changed, and I went along with the flow.

DBS: Do you feel that your remedial courses have addressed your needs academically?

Toya: Just one and that's reading. That's the only class that's helping me. My writing and math are absolutely a breeze.

DBS: Did you have any hard feelings about being in the writing and the math?

Toya: Well, yeah. At the beginning, I wasn't putting forth any effort. . . . I didn't have to bring the book home to study because I knew the material already, so it was like wasting my time. I started making the best of it.

DBS: Would you like to make some closing remarks?

Toya: Well, I would like to say that if anyone who is listening has to take remedial courses, don't feel down; think positive; do what you have to do. . . .

DBS: How do you see your participation in the developmental [remedial] program? Do you see it as something that's assisting you with your education?

Kya: Well, it's holding me back, really. I cannot get into my career. I'm going to be 20 years old two years from now, and I want to be into my career. I know half of this stuff, but vocabulary class and writing class are just basic English. The math class is like holding me down. You can't move on; you can't get out of it, and it's like you're stuck. We're stuck there

until we pass the class, and if we don't pass, we could be there until our junior or senior year. . . .

DBS: Do you see the remedial program as something that is addressing your academic needs?

Brad: It made it easier for me to adapt to college life, but it wasn't necessary. Since I've been in it, and now I'm getting out, well, I don't think it was necessary. . . .

DBS: Do you feel that the remedial courses are helping you to reach your career goal?

Jan: At first, no. But now, maybe. I am learning some new things and doing what I am supposed to do to get out. I don't want to repeat these remedials.

DBS: How do you feel about participating in the remedial program?

Donna: Well, it's okay, but I know it's going to take me longer to finish from here. I plan to go to the summer session to catch up.

Consistent with this view, students also perceive participation as being demeaning with negative motivation, for "what we are doing is telling them in a hundred whispered or unspoken ways each day, that we really do not believe in them" (Howard & Hammond 1985, p. 8). Students seem to interpret such whispers through the names that we assign to the remedial programs as indicated in the next section.

Program Identification

Students seem to recognize a negative message in the actual names of the remedial program itself. For example:

- DBS: Do you have any closing remarks?
- Toni: Well, all I have to say is that if you have to take remedials don't think that I am dumber than the rest of them . . . everybody else. Just go in there and do what you have to do, and just think of it as I am getting an extra step.
- DBS: Do you prefer hearing remedial or developmental when someone refers to your reading, writing, and math classes?
- Donna: Neither one. Developmental sounds like a put down, kind of like when you hear special education. You automatically think of slow learners, that mentally something is wrong that has prevented them from learning at the same rate that you learn, and it's just the way people poke fun. It's just my opinion. . . .
- DBS: How do you feel about the names developmental and remedial? Which one do you prefer?
- Kya: When I was in high school that was like slow students.
- DBS: Which one?
- Kya: Remedial. It was the class for people who are slow. When I was going to school, I was never in a developmental class. They both mean the same to me.

- DBS: How do you feel about the names remedial or developmental?
- Greg: It doesn't really matter. Everybody knows that it's for people who are not that smart--like in high school. I don't tell too many people what I'm taking.
- DBS: When you refer to your reading, writing, and math courses, do you say remedial or developmental?
- Toya: Developmental, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I don't worry about what people say.
- DBS: How do you feel about the name of the program?
- Carl: What do you mean?
- DBS: Do you refer to the program as remedial or developmental?
- Carl: I've never really thought about it. I like it, and I don't care what you call it. Everybody knows that it's reading, writing, and math.
- DBS: For this interview, would you prefer my using remedial or developmental in referring to the reading, writing, and math courses?
- Ray: It don't matter.
- DBS: Why?
- Ray: They both mean the same thing.
- DBS: Do you ever talk about your reading activities?
- Jan: Sometimes, with my friends or people in the class.

- DBS: How do you refer to your class--remedial or developmental?
- Jan: Developmental because that's what they call it here. I called it remedial before I came to . . . because they are really like high school courses.
- DBS: Which name--remedial or developmental--do you prefer using when referring to your reading, writing, and math courses?
- Cora: Developmental
- DBS: Why?
- Cora: Developmental sounds better than remedial. I know that they both mean the same thing, but developmental doesn't make it sound so bad.
- DBS: Since you are returning to school after 15 years, did you know anything about the reading, writing, and mathematics courses?
- Brad: Not a lot. I knew that they were remedials and would help me with those things I know I had forgotten.
- DBS: Why did you say remedial and not developmental?
- Brad: I really don't know. I guess I hear remedial more than developmental.
- DBS: Which one do you prefer?
- Brad: Either or. They both mean the same--don't they?

Being sensitive to students perceptions of the terminology used to refer to collegiate remedial

programs, educators have attempted to remove this stigma by changing the terminology from remedial to developmental (Abraham, 1987a; Clowes, 1980; 1982; Cross, 1976; Wright & Cahalan, 1985). They maintain that the reference to remedial usually produces a negative reaction while the use of the word, developmental, removes the negative stigma and some of the adverse reactions. According to Nist (1985), however, while the names changed, the theoretical approach, pedagogy, and content did not change. Only the terminology had changed. This change in terminology has not altered the students' perceptions or the demeaning stigma associated with collegiate remedial programs.

Implicit Messages

In conjunction with this demeaning and negative stigma, one student feels that the structure or system sends a message of doubt or lowered expectations:

DBS: Do you see the remedial program as something that is addressing your academic needs?

Brad: There's a stipulation that you have to go back into your remedial courses, and if you pass them, you can move on and try to get a regular class. That's where my problem lies because I've held an A average in English and

math all through, so now I'm being stagnated. I am going to be pre-advised back into those courses again. . . . Because I'm in remedial class, they say I've failed until I show them I've passed, and then I can move on. I still have a big problem with that.

DBS: What is the source of that problem?

Brad: It's telling me I've failed even before I have, so if I was borderline that would make me give up and go through it another semester because they didn't think I could pass, and I wouldn't think that I could pass, so I wouldn't pass. This college gives a lot of support, but then it contradicts itself when it says we know you can make it, but you're not going to make it, so do it again.

The student's frustrations are quite evident.

The implicit message of doubt, as perceived by the student, is negative motivation which may cause the student to react either positively or negatively in a complex learning environment, for the value of the course has been compromised by the perceived structure of the program. As Cross (1983) warns:

Too often in our dealings with low-achievers, we have lowered our expectations, admitting to students as well as to ourselves that we doubt that the student can succeed. The experience of not succeeding in school is so pervasive for basic-skills students that lowered expectations is the last thing they need. (p. 17)

Perhaps, this rather implicit message of doubt in the student's ability to succeed is felt by other students when they express a need to prove themselves:

DBS: What aspect of the program do you dislike?

Carl: I was used to being a D student, but here under 80 in an F. That makes you push yourself harder.

DBS: What about your participation in the program makes you feel you have advanced?

Toya: It's the instructors. The students who are around aren't all low that they're in a remedial class. They try to make the best of it. They feel they were set back, so they are going to prove to the instructors that they can move on and do better.

DBS: How do you feel knowing that you're in remedial classes and can already do the required work successfully?

Jan: My attitude hasn't changed about myself. I'm just dealing with it one day at a time. I know within myself I can get out of there, so I won't let it get me down.

DBS: How did you feel when you realized these were skills that you had already mastered?

Donna: At first, I was a little intimidated, but I said if I show them this is too easy, then they'll say you can test out. . . .

Just as some students perceive an expression of doubt as an inherent part of the remedial program, there are others who feel that participation in the program is both very positive and an invaluable experience.

DBS: If you had to evaluate the classroom environment, how would you describe it?

Carl: Everybody wants to learn, and they take time to teach you. In high school they teach you and that's it. Here they give you a chance to make up if you're doing really bad; they help you out; they talk to you. You can talk to them, and they ask you if you have any problems. So, here, they give you a lot of chances. . . .

DBS: How do you feel about the remedial program now that it's midway through the semester?

Toni: Well, I would recommend it to anyone just coming out of high school and feel that they're not college material. . . . It's not going to hold you back because when I talk to other people who have taken developmental courses, they say they are really advanced in their English 111 and all the rest of those courses because they were refreshed.

DBS: How did you feel about taking all three remedial courses?

Cora: I am glad that I did take them because it helped me to improve my education.

- DBS: How did you feel when you were told that you had tested into all three?
- Ray: I knew that I was going to test into all three. I knew that because I had forgotten most of the things that I had learned in school. I need the courses, and I need the help.
- DBS: What has participation in this class done for you?
- Ray: Like I said, it has made me try for higher goals.
- DBS: How did you feel when you found out you had to take three remedial classes?
- Carl: I felt happy because I knew it would help me in the future. Things that I'm learning now, well, I didn't learn in high school. Now that I know, I could probably take the ACT and get a better score. I really like remedial courses, since I think they'll help me in the future.
- DBS: When you entered the classroom, did your attitude affect your participation?
- Jan: No. I learned that some of the things I thought I knew from high school, well, I really didn't know, and it helped me to learn what I didn't know. Now I think I am much better than what I would be.
- DBS: If you had a choice, would you elect to take remedial courses or go into your regular freshmen courses?
- Jan: I would rather be in remedial courses since I now know there are things I need to brush up on.

The students' perceptions of benefitting from participation in the remedial program validates the findings of Boylan (1983) and Kulik, Kulik, and Schwalb (1983). Their findings indicate that participation in remedial programs is closely associated with increased short-term persistence and improved grade point averages (GPA). In fact, according to a study conducted by Boylan and Bonham (1992), the cumulative GPA for those students participating in remedial (developmental) programs at postsecondary institutions is consistently above 2.0 at "all types of institutions" (p. 3). Moreover, students who participate in postsecondary remedial programs tend to pass the initial courses in the freshmen curriculum.

Perceived Benefits

Undeniably, underprepared students feel positive about participation in a remedial program and enjoy their learning experiences especially when they perceive them as having value or relevance as posited by the expectancy value theory; that is, the activities are actually preparing them for college and life. In fact, Silverman (1983) related this

phenomenon to the theoretical framework of Kurt Lewin (1951). His theory maintains that behavior is a function of an individual and his/her milieu. The individual and his surroundings combine to govern the individual's life space. New social relations with instructors and peers have distinguished the life space. "The position of the student in this newly increased and differentiated life space and his reaction to these forces in his life help determine resultant behavior" (Silverman, 1983, p. 18), which is clearly articulated by Toni:

Toni: They expect you to be adults, but, then, they will hold your hand. All right, in the beginning of the semester, they will hold your hand and let you go on and let you go. And right now, I am walking by myself, and I really feel strong. I don't feel like I am going to fall, and I am not even looking back.

The students' perceived benefits of participation in a remedial program cause the student to respond in a positive manner. This finding contradicts the notion that students come to postsecondary institutions with a strong denial of any academic deficiencies (Guinta, Bonifacio, & McVey, 1987). The data also reflect that these students are keenly aware

that too little was expected of them in high school, which led to inadequate preparation for college-based work. Carl and Donna acknowledge their inadequate preparation as follows:

Carl: I feel like if I hadn't clowned around a lot I would probably be in my regular classes. I thought college would be just like high school. I thought it would be an easy get away with no homework. All of those things catch up with you. I wish I had learned more and just paid attention.

Donna: When I was going through the class with . . . , I realized that some of the things she was talking about I had never heard of. Some of the people in class remembered from high school. I said, 'not from my high school'. . . .

While some students may have indicated that certain skills were never taught in their high schools, Losak, Schwartz, and Morris (1982) warn:

Asking students to report on their high school experiences involves many risks for the researcher; inaccurate recall, distortion, and providing socially desirable responses are only a few of the possible biases which will likely remain with them and influence their judgments. . . . (p. 29)

The students actually perceived themselves as being underprepared for postsecondary education. Moreover, these students were able to validate or negate their previous learning experiences and

abilities after having been placed in an environment with varying degrees of preparation. According to Gruenberg (1983), this environment enhances underprepared students' self-esteem when they realize that others also have weaknesses as well as strengths, and value is placed on the strengths. This is exemplified by Toni and Greg:

DBS: How do you feel about the material being used to help you in the class?

Toni: I think they were really good materials because I see it's words...but you don't pay any attention to them. I mean I can use different words now, and it would mean the same thing as saying what I've been saying, but it is just a whole different way. And sometimes, people would use a word you think is a big 20 dollars word, and it is nothing but a little ten cents word. It's just that I didn't know anything about it; it means the same thing.

DBS: Do you feel that you have become a better reader due to your participation in the reading class?

Greg: To tell you the truth, yes, because after reading Malcolm X and realizing how he learns with the dictionary and books, I started trying harder. I could tell that a lot of people in the class knew more than me because they talk better. I think they read more. I just used to read off and on, but now I enjoy reading, so ever so often I have to pick up a book and read it even if it is a little pamphlet or something. . . .

Similarly, Brad acknowledges the impact of the learning environment on his self-esteem:

DBS: What was your attitude at first?

Brad: At first, I felt I probably needed the classes. The instructors were great, and I obtained a lot of confidence to go into my 111 courses. . . .

For the most part, students responded to the remedial environment by persevering in the program, although one female student responded by giving up in one of her classes:

DBS: What about your enthusiasm for school right now?

Kya: I don't like coming anymore. Maybe it's because I'm in this class. . . . I could take it next semester. Last week I missed three or four days, so I went to the doctor and got an excuse for that. I missed math class on purpose because we had a test in there, and I didn't know what was on it.

In the next section, I will summarize the impact of the students' perceptions and how their interpretations ultimately influence their responses to mandatory participation in a remedial program.

Conclusions

In the preceding sections, I have used the voices of selected African American participants to

illustrate data and to illuminate issues germane to mandatory participation in a collegiate remedial program. I will first summarize the findings that either support or refute the statistics of other related studies in the literature as pertaining to remedial education. Second, I will discuss students' perceptions of specific aspects of the remedial program to highlight the impact of mandatory participation on students' overall academic progress. Finally, I attempt to draw conclusions as to what causes some underprepared students to persevere and others to desist and ultimately withdraw from the program and the university.

In general, what has emerged from this descriptive case study research is a theme of value. Although the faculty and staff of the remedial program may profess to have tightly structured classes which contribute to the success of the students, it is the perceived value of participation in the remedial program which determines the quality of the students' participation.

In almost all instances, students' opinions of the classroom environment were definitely influenced

by the teaching/learning practices and the perceived faculty interest in students. In fact, students expressed a willingness to "try harder" and to assume responsibility for their education by becoming "independent learners" in an environment that seemed to genuinely welcome and accept students while simultaneously "forcing" them to strive for the attainment of their unique interests and/or career aspirations. Because of this environment, five students tended to be satisfied with the quality of services, the degree to which the activities helped them to be successful, and the supportive manner of staff.

Perhaps, this satisfaction, which was also determined in earlier studies, was best articulated by Toni who described her progress in "vocabulary building" in terms of dollars and cents. As she increased her vocabulary, she assessed her progress in terms of monetary gains; she exchanged her "ten cents words" for "twenty dollar words." Success in college, however, entails more than mastery of content. Focusing on attitudes and values appear to be essential to the overall success of underprepared

students. The programs and proposals needed to address this concern will be presented in Chapter 5.

Unlike Toni, however, five students perceived participation in the remedial program as having no apparent value. They genuinely believed that, when they graduated from high school, they had mastered the skills necessary for college level work and did not need to enroll in the "refresher courses." For these students, the remedial classroom experiences satisfied no expectations and shattered many illusions as suggested by Guinta, Bonifacio, and McVey (1987). Because of the frustrations of these underprepared students, they, initially, did not perceive their participation in the remedial classes as being of any significant value to them. As these five students became actively engaged in the learning environment of the remedial classroom, however, their perception of the remedial classes changed from one of no value to one of necessary worth in a structured and supportive learning environment. The value of such an environment is clearly articulated by Kya who seems to reject the notion of "spoon-fed" knowledge because it

has no perceptible worth and appears to compromise the quality of the learning experiences.

Just as these underprepared students could not readily assign value to mandatory participation in a remedial program, students also experienced substantial difficulty in assigning any educational value to mandated competency tests. Most believed that the tests were administrative devices, which were administered to restrict their participation at the university, rather than educational instruments used to ascertain who would benefit most from the institution's remedial program. This is quite evident in the students' comments on mandated testing, for instance:

It's unfair to have everything count on that one time.

Some people do not test well . . . and cannot take standardized tests and are just as smart as possible.

I don't think it [test] showed everything I know. I didn't think it was necessary.

If they were going to put me in the remedials, they should of just done it. I didn't need to waste my time taking more tests.

The test was something they used to say, yes, you need these classes.

I just didn't think the test showed all I know and learned.

From these students' perspective, their participation in remedial programs was not the result of their own effort, but the consequences of inappropriate assessment. Moreover, eight students felt that placement in the remedial program should not have been solely determined by their performance on standardized tests. As Toya recommended, "something written or an interview" should be generated to supplement the current placement practices. Examples of such practices and proposals will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In conjunction with the students' views of mandatory assessment, initially, students did not perceive mandatory participation in a remedial program as a worthwhile undertaking; instead, six felt that their participation in the remedial program represented a needless imposition which denied them the right to enter the regular freshmen program at the institution. With the exception of the non-traditional student (32 years old) and the student who admitted to "clowning around a lot" in high school,

eight of the participants felt that they were adequately prepared for college-level work.

For these students, initial placement in the remedial program engendered feelings of both bewilderment and entrapment because they felt that they would remain trapped in the remedial courses until they were in their "junior or senior year of college" or until they were at least "90 years old." They felt helpless and frustrated. To build a community of support to discourage such feelings of helplessness, frustration, and anxiety, it is important to realize that increased articulation, collaboration, and partnerships are imperative to enhance prematriculation efforts. Such efforts and programs will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Although students later realized that they were indeed underprepared for college-level work and that the skills would be invaluable to them later, they still felt the need or the pressure to prove to the faculty and staff, and perhaps themselves, that they were capable of successfully completing college-level work. For instance:

Donna: At first, I was a little intimidated,
 but I said if I show them this is too

easy, then they'll say you can test out and go to your regular courses. I couldn't go into a regular English course until I passed reading and writing, which is keeping me behind in English.

Carl: I was used to being a D student, but here under 80 is an F. That makes you push yourself harder.

Hence, the students perceived both a personal and programmatic burden of proof as an integral part of their participation. This perception encouraged students to persevere and to continually assess the value of their participation as validated by family members and friends enrolled in regular freshman courses as indicated by Kya and Carl:

Kya: Some of us come to college the first semester and don't come back. If I want to make something of myself, I have to go. It's not like I can say stop here and say, Kya, you're not going back to school. I thought about it though. My mom told me to do what I have to do, and don't let it discourage you.

Carl: I feel confident. I feel I can do it. My family has given me a lot of support. I know they are with me.

Admittedly, it is difficult to determine, and even harder to document, "just how thoroughly the individual's ability to compete, to excel, and to achieve are shaped by self-image--which is...closely

tied to the perceptions and expectations of the individual exhibited by others" (Wharton, 1986, p.8). For the students who participated in this study, their self image became a positive and potent force in their remedial activities; they became actively engaged in the learning environment and assumed responsibility for their learning. Perhaps, this positive and potent force was influenced by the perceived negative labeling of the remedial program and the underprepared students. Despite the use of the name, developmental, students often sensed an implicit message of being "slow," "dumb" or that "mentally, something is wrong" by participating in the remedial program. Hence, this form of failure labeling is of no value to the student; rather, it is a source of hurt and additional pressure which also makes the students' burden of proof more intense and more complex.

Although underprepared students may eventually perceive some inherent value in mandatory participation in a remedial program, there is relentless pressure for students to succeed. Their participation, then, is almost analogous to that of a double-edged sword. That is, they enter the

university with pressure to prove their academic worth to themselves and to the institution while simultaneously coping with the failure labels and the implicit message of doubt. For those students who persevere and exit the remedial courses, there is additional pressure to succeed again, so another cycle begins.

According to Roueche and Armes (1983), "this pressure can be frightening when successful experiences are not part of his [her] daily habit" (p. 18). Perhaps, it is this sense of pressure that caused Kya to give up and eventually withdraw from the program and the institution. For instance:

Kya: I don't like coming anymore. . . .
Maybe it's because I'm in this class. . . .

For underprepared students, such as Kya, programs and proposals must be proffered to address the implicit message of doubt and the debilitating effects of pressure that can determine a student's level of educational attainment. Such programs and proposals are discussed in Chapter 5.

The issue of underpreparedness continues to be a pervasive problem at postsecondary institutions. First, it is obvious that students still come to

college lacking the requisite skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Second, not all high school students are exposed to a curriculum or an environment which fosters appropriate skills necessary for academic success at postsecondary institutions.

Moreover, as Trow (1983) indicates:

For whatever combination of societal reasons, the attitudes of many high school students have also shifted perceptibly, with apathy and disengagement from education prevalent. There has been a decline in student willingness to invest substantial work and effort in the learning process. (p. 24)

Third, what may be considered as preparedness at one institution, as indicated by Donna, could be defined as underpreparedness at another institution. Therefore, postsecondary institutions must become aggressive in clearly articulating to the school districts the skill levels required for their respective institutions.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR REMEDIATION

According to Harold Hodgkinson (1991), the publishing of A Nation at Risk (1983) symbolized the anger and frustrations of educators who realized that the educational attainment for youngsters in the local school districts had severely deteriorated. Major signs of deterioration were the decline in students' college admission test scores in language and computational skills in particular; increase in the high school dropout and unemployment rates; an extremely diversified curriculum with a lack of integration of instruction from the high school to higher education; and increasingly diverse student populations with a considerable number of limited English-speaking pupils (Carter-Wells, 1989; Cross, 1983; Hargadon; 1982; National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1982).

These facts, which are often used to document the crisis in education, are obvious to educators and researchers and quite appalling to look at. In fact, it has been shown that a small percentage of high school students is actively engaged in a rigorous,

college preparatory program. In this instance, a strong case can be made that high schools are not providing adequate preparation to allow entering freshmen to begin college level work. It is unlikely that a representative portion of African American and other minority students receive appropriate academic guidance early in their high school preparation that will ensure they take the appropriate courses to meet the demands of postsecondary institutions. "People are complaining that the diploma has been devalued in this nation to the point of meaninglessness" (Quoted in Bracey, 1991, p. 86).

Faculty and staff of higher education have often been accused of "washing" their hands of underpreparation by blaming the high schools for this problem. As has been suggested by Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates (1989), however, students may not ever be academically prepared to satisfy the demands of higher education. "There are unique learning, reading, and thinking demands of the postsecondary environment that are not merely extensions of a high school experience for which students cannot possibly be completely prepared" (Carter-Wells, 1989, p. 3).

Moreover, according to William Perry (1970), the majority of entering freshmen has not achieved the level of maturation necessary for success at postsecondary institutions. Supposedly, both academic and social experiences in colleges and universities help to encourage maturation that will enhance successful learning opportunities. It is, perhaps, this final supposition that supports the notion that students are not "finished learners" when they enter postsecondary institutions and that much of the higher education experience cannot be taught while in high school (Carter-Wells; 1989). Most students, however, come to the institutions believing that they are finished learners and prepared to begin college level work.

Education continues to have underprepared students, and postsecondary institutions must assist in the efforts to ensure the continued growth and vitality of higher education (Tinto, 1987). It is at this juncture that collegiate remedial programs must begin to focus on a transformative curriculum, as suggested by Doll (1988):

A transformative curriculum focuses on the qualitative changes the participants--teachers as

well as students--go through as they engage in the curriculum: here curriculum is being considered as a process of engagement not as a 'course to be run.' The measured curriculum on the other hand focuses on the course not on the runners. . . . (p. 127)

In this research, I have attempted to focus on the qualitative changes of the students--the runners--to ascertain remedial students' values, ideas, and experiences which may impact the learning environment and ultimately lead to a transformative curriculum.

In Chapter 1, I attempted to establish a rationale for this research by suggesting how a large majority of socially and academically at-risk African American students and other minority students are not adequately prepared for the demands of higher education and still continue to graduate from high school underprepared. I delineate several explanations which account for the proliferation of remedial programs at postsecondary institutions. I also discussed the controversies and uncertainties that have beset these programs and dictated their content and structure. Because of the controversies and stigma associated with collegiate remedial programs, I suggested that investigating students' perception of mandatory participation in a remedial program might provide invaluable data that

would document the impact or value of their participation for effective teaching/learning practices.

In Chapter 2, I argued that colleges and universities have never enjoyed an entering population of students adequately prepared for the demands of higher education. I discussed the persisting problems of underpreparedness and the varying approaches designed to address this issue at the collegiate level. I also suggested that the need for collegiate remedial programs will continue for the next decades and that insights for effective program practices might be ascertained from the students' interpretations of their experiences while they are actively involved in the program.

In Chapter 3, I established the methodology and delineated the activities by which I investigated the perceptions of ten remedial students who were actively engaged in the remedial program. In Chapter 4, I presented the data. I concluded that the quality of the students' participation is determined by the value that students are able to discern from their involvement in such programs. I inferred that students

move from feelings of bewilderment to acceptance while participating in the remedial class. Moreover, students appeared to be satisfied with the outcome of their participation when they realized the intrinsic (personal) and extrinsic (programmatic) value of their participation.

Using representative verbatim quotes, I attempted to document that students' perception of mandatory participation in a remedial program often dictates the quality of the learning experiences and the benefits of the program. Although freshman students perceive some value in their participation, they also grapple with the debilitating effects of pressure and unspoken doubt that seem to permeate all levels of participation. If there is to be success for these students, it is imperative that institutions of higher education strengthen their commitment to underprepared African American and other minority students by enhancing the current remedial programs and practices. I use this final chapter to suggest programs to address the issues brought forth in Chapter 4. Before I illuminate these recommendations, however, I provide a summary of the

current efforts underway to address the issue of academic preparation for college.

Summary of Current Efforts

The myriad of recommendations from state and regional commissions and public hearings can be delineated as collaboration, articulation, accountability, and standardization. The list consists of standardizing and upgrading the quality of the college preparatory curriculum in reading, writing, and mathematics; tightening academic standards and raising entrance requirements for selected postsecondary institutions; tightening high school graduation requirements; improving teacher education programs; systematically collecting and reporting statistics pertaining to student progress toward meeting standards of postsecondary institutions; instituting joint councils of higher education/school boards with accountability for statewide instructional policies; establishing programs to enhance the communication between students, parents, and educators at all levels of schooling; and providing academic support in reading, writing, and mathematics (Bandy, 1985; Carter-Wells, 1989; Davidson, 1983; Farland & Anderson, 1988;

Illinois State Board of Higher Education, 1986; Louisiana Board of Regents, 1988; Lutkus, 1985; New Mexico State Department of Education, 1987; Ohio Board of Regents, 1981; Preer, 1983; Southern Regional Education Board, 1985; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1989).

It is obvious from the various recommendations regarding academic preparation for college that educators, state and local officials, legislators, and the public are keenly aware of the need for coherence and collaboration. This is apparent in the variety of current collaborative efforts underway throughout the country. For example, concurrent enrollment of high school students in college courses offered on a high school campus is one type of collaborative (Smith, 1979). This program may also include visits by parents and students to postsecondary institutions and the publication of a brochure enumerating suggested college preparatory courses (Mickelson & Sperry, 1984). Another collaborative effort includes the exchange of academic personnel. Specifically, college faculty are used in cooperative development projects in certain disciplines, in speaker's bureaus to review the

significance of a solid foundation in mathematics with students in high school, and as guest lecturers with in-service writing projects and summer writing institutes (Adelman, 1983; Cappucilli, 1982; Cox, 1982; Tomhave, 1985).

In addition to high school-university collaboration, there are prematriculation programs designed for specific groups. These programs have generally been limited to talented students with features such as summer or joint enrollment, internship positions and research, and early admissions (Cornett, 1986; Dallas, 1982). There are also programs which address the needs of underprepared or not extremely motivated students (Roueche & Snow, 1979; Fields, 1987). Activities include financial aid, tutoring programs, curriculum development and motivation efforts.

Although the various programs address the efforts necessary to bridge the gap between high school and college work, none identify strategies that will impact the successful participation of students in collegiate remedial programs while they are actively engaged in the process. Therefore, I proffer the following

recommendations to address the needs of underprepared freshmen while they are participating in a remedial program at a postsecondary institution:

- The University should award credit towards graduation for remedial courses;
- Students participating in the remedial program should be involved in motivational workshops;
- The University should implement a mentoring program to provide individual and personal support for underprepared students;
- The University should develop a repertoire of assessment devices to replace the current monolithic system; and
- The University should initiate a high school university collaborative designed to enhance prematriculation efforts as early as the freshman year in high school.

Each recommendation is discussed in the next section.

Recommendations

American Higher Education is caught in a policy dilemma of its own making. On the one hand, we have opened the doors of education to people who were not considered 'college material'. . . . On the other, however, our document structures, defined historically by liberal arts colleges and largely duplicated by community colleges, have not always been equal to the task of educating the

very people who have been attracted to these institutions. To be sure, the record is far from one of absolute failure, but the failure which we have experienced is far too important and subtle to be passed over lightly. (Smith, 1982, p. 7)

With the projected increase in the number of students who will continue to graduate from high school underprepared and continue to seek admission to postsecondary institutions, educators must examine their present forms of remediation and identify the "subtle" forms of failure that impact persistence and academic success of entering freshman students. As indicated by this study, subtle forms of failure surround the perceptions of the students and their response to the remedial program. One recurring issue, which permeated the findings of this research, was the question of value that seemed to influence students' perception, level of involvement, and response to mandatory participation. In fact, students appear to be ambivalent about the value of participation in a remedial program. Therefore, based upon this perception, I submit that the university should consider a "value-added approach" to the basic components of the remedial program. Preer (1983) defined the value-added approach as one that:

. . . can be used at any academic level in conjunction with rather than instead of traditional grades. It can involve many sorts of assessment instruments, including objective or essay tests, oral examinations, or other indicators appropriate to the course of the program. In its simplest form, the value-added approach can involve an initial 'pretest' to indicate the student's entering level of competence. (p. 77)

Unlike Preer's emphasis on assessment, I use value-added approach to refer to any efforts that may serve to assign benefits or worth to certain components of the remedial program. For the purposes of this discussion, allow me to take an adversarial role. I recommend that the university begin with the value-added approach by awarding credit towards graduation for the remedial courses. Although students currently receive institutional credit for remedial courses and grades are computed in their grade point averages (GPA), none of the credit hours may be used to satisfy graduation requirements. In addition, underprepared students are also limited to the number of credit hours that they may attempt while enrolled in remedial classes which may prolong their matriculation at the university. Donna acknowledges this when she says:

Remedial classes, classes that I had heard of, you pay for, but there's no college credit in them. It's just another obstacle to set you back, and you're going to be in the college until you're 90.

This approach devalues the efforts of the students participating in the remedial program.

Participation in remedial programs at postsecondary institutions must be perceived as having explicit value for Donna and other remedial participants just like her who perceive the program as "just another obstacle." Efforts must be undertaken to devise a curriculum that would allow a remedial student to receive credit for remedial courses. For example, students should be allowed to substitute at least one remedial class for one required elective in their freshman year or in their respective areas of study. Another option could include an exemption from the required seminar class, Career Development 112, since the program provides the foundation for students to achieve in both their educational and career goals. Such an option could afford students, like Brad, the opportunity to receive credit for his 15 years of work experience. Since Brad has already established himself in a career, participation in a course designed to

expose him to career goals and objectives in life has no real value for him as demonstrated in this interview session:

Brad: I can only go so high in the field I'm in without a college education. I know the work; I have the experience, but I don't have a degree.

DBS: Did you see the remedial program as an imposition, or as something that truly assisted you?

Brad: It made it easier for me to adapt to college life, but it wasn't necessary. Since I've been in it, and now, I'm getting out, well, I don't think it was necessary.

Hence, by assigning some merit to participation in the remedial classes, students similar to Brad will not perceive the program as being punitive, and students could possibly be motivated to satisfy remedial requirements in an expeditious manner. In addition, underprepared students will no longer view participation in the program as demeaning or as a needless imposition if they can readily identify tangible benefits.

In conjunction with this change in perception, I submit that students participating in the remedial program should also be concurrently involved in motivational workshops. Eight of the ten participants

experienced feelings of bewilderment, anger, intimidation, frustration, and helplessness when they were assigned to the remedial classes, for example:

- Donna: At first, I was a little intimidated.
- Toya: I just decided to make the best of it.
- Kya: I wasn't too fond of the remedials . . . You can't move on; you can't get out of it, and it's like you stuck.
- Brad: I was uncomfortable in the beginning because I didn't know just how much I needed to learn, or how much I didn't need.
- Jan: At first, I was angry. I was very, very angry and upset.
- Toni: I was rather upset because it was something I always had and you know it's like wasting time to me.
- Ray: I got to the point at mid term where it started getting kind of, not hard, but I started getting frustrated. I don't know why.
- Cora: Well, at first . . . you have that feeling that 'wow' I wasn't as prepared as I thought.

Based upon the comments of these students, it is imperative that motivational workshops occur at the beginning of the semester, mid term, and prior to the final examination period to alleviate feelings of stress and disappointment. Specifically, the initial workshop should occur prior to registration and

immediately after students have been assigned to remedial courses. The purpose of this workshop would be to disclose all pertinent information regarding placement and the manner in which they would be assigned to the remedial courses. As a follow-up to this session, students would then meet with instructors or counselors to review the assessment procedures and to discuss strengths and talents as well as academic weaknesses. In sum, students would be dealt with forthrightly and with candor.

In a similar manner, at least two other motivational workshops should occur during the semester to help participants cope with any stressful situations that may be related to their participation in the program. Emphasis should be placed on the value of mandatory participation in the remedial program and any activities that could prove to be a source of motivation for the students. For example, former participants with varying degrees of success could be featured as guest speakers or facilitators. These former participants should include those who have recently completed remedial coursework, honor students, student leaders, graduating seniors, and professionals.

The format should be informal, whenever possible, to encourage students to interact with the selected speakers to illuminate their perceived value of mandatory participation in the remedial program. Such a workshop could augment the nurturing environment prevalent in the remedial classroom and provide additional support for the remedial students. Collectively, these efforts would enhance the perception of value that should be associated with students' successful participation in the remedial program.

Although the motivational workshops would provide some additional value, the former participants could be further utilized to implement a mentoring program. I suggest the implementation of a mentoring program to provide individual and personal support for those students who are frustrated and disillusioned because of their mandatory participation in a remedial program. The likely consequence of this disillusionment and frustration was clearly articulated by Kya:

Some of us come to college the first semester and don't come back . . . I thought about it.

To address the needs of Kya and many others like her, mentors should be sensitive to the anxiety and

frustrations of the students in the remedial environment. Moreover, they should be willing to share coping strategies and provide appropriate support and encouragement when necessary. The mentors should work closely with the instructors to develop strategies and realistic classroom assessments that would be pertinent to remedial students and their successful completion of the remedial coursework. This approach would enable the remedial students to perceive the mentors as friends and as individuals who care and value them as both students and as human beings, for "all of us like to feel that we are needed, that we are important, and that. . . . we are actively involved with our own learning program" (Fordyce, 1991, p. 4). Hopefully, this approach will stimulate and motivate remedial students to persist until they have attained their career goal.

This caring attitude should also be incorporated in the manner in which students are tested and ultimately excluded from full participation in the freshman program and mandated to participate in the remedial program at postsecondary institutions. Colleges and universities should examine their test

requirements and consider alternative methods of placement testing to enhance their current efforts. One participant, Toya, alludes to alternative methods when she says: "I think it should be something written or an interview." Consistent with this participant's view and others like her who feel that "it's unfair to have everything count on that one time," I recommend that the university develop a distinct repertoire of assessment devices to replace the monolithic system of pre-determined standardized test scores to evaluate students' academic preparation for college. This repertoire of assessment devices should include a combination of at least three of the following: high school transcripts, letters of recommendation, personal essays, interviews, autobiographies, work experience, and test scores. Standardized tests do not reflect "all that they know and don't know." Students would probably perceive value in mandatory participation in a remedial program if they were afforded comprehensive and equitable assessment for placement.

The evaluation procedures should be clearly articulated to all prospective college students prior to their enrollment at the institution. I recommend a

high school/university collaboration to address the issue of underpreparedness and the necessary prematriculation efforts. I submit that cooperative efforts are necessary to improve preparatory work at the secondary level and to bridge the gap between high school and higher education.

Prematriculation efforts should begin as early as the freshman year in high school with emphasis on attitudes and value of proficiency in the basic skills. This approach will encourage students like Carl, Ray, Cora and others like them who "clown around a lot," just "lay back" or "sleep" in class to seek those skills and concepts that will allow them to move effectively into postsecondary education. Special efforts should be made to include those students who indicate that they have no intentions of continuing their education beyond high school. According to Losak, Schwartz and Morris (1982), these same students often change their mind and enroll in higher education at a later time, such as participants Brad, Ray, Cora, and Greg. The fact that 75% of the high school graduates throughout the country are currently continuing in some form of higher education suggests

"that basic academic skills are essential even to those students who have little intention of continuing their education while in the secondary program" (p. 30).

Although cooperative efforts are currently underway, I recommend that high school/university collaboration be enhanced to include adequate dialogue among postsecondary and high school faculty regarding appropriate preparation of students and the unique roles of schools and postsecondary institutions.

In addressing the recommended changes suggested in this study, individuals involved with the academic preparation of students must begin to work closely together. Educators, state and local officials, legislators, and the general public are keenly aware of the connections between secondary school programs and students' performance in postsecondary institutions. Acting independently or waiting for one group to solve the existing problem of underpreparedness simply will not do. One major problem is that recommendations for academic preparation and remedial programs at postsecondary institutions have been made by individuals outside of the programs and the classrooms. It is time for those involved within the remedial

programs to influence priorities for improving the academic preparation of our students. This study and the recommendations support such an initiative. Students perceive a need to identify value in their remedial efforts, and we as educators must address this need to encourage students to persist in their academic pursuits.

Suggested Future Research

The data provided in the study suggests that there is still a substantial void in research pertaining to underpreparedness and postsecondary remedial programs. While a plethora of data may exist documenting the immediate gains and retention of underprepared students who participate in postsecondary remedial programs, little is known about the possible effects of students' actual involvement in such programs. Additional research information is needed to document the impact of classroom participation and its influence on students' access, persistence, and attrition at postsecondary institutions. This possibility provides the impetus for future inquiry.

Research projects and data gathered to document the efforts of postsecondary remedial programs may

serve to broaden our understanding of underprepared students and enhance our efforts to meet the needs of these students. These efforts may be guided by answers to research questions, such as: How does the classroom culture of the remedial classroom affect the persistence of underprepared students? How do students' life histories and classroom experiences influence African American students perceptions of postsecondary remedial programs? or European Americans? Who or what defines literacy in a postsecondary remedial program? Does participation in a postsecondary remedial program perpetuate the marginalization of African Americans and other minorities? How does mandatory testing reflect what we consider to be preparedness? Seeking answers to these questions might provide invaluable data for postsecondary remedial programs.

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APPENDIX A

TOYA

DBS: Toya, do you feel that you needed to enroll in the remedial program here at the university?

TOYA: Well, no I was under a circumstance. I enrolled real late, and my academic folder was still at USL. The University wouldn't accept any official documents being faxed, so I had to take what I had since I didn't have an extra copy of my ACT; however, I'm happy because I'm benefitting from it.

DBS: How did you feel initially when you found out you had to take the remedial courses?

TOYA: I felt they would set me back a whole semester, but now I've just advanced myself. I'm very comfortable.

DBS: How does your participation in the program make you feel that you have advanced yourself?

TOYA: It's the instructors. The instructor is really something. She makes you feel special, really like you're somebody. The students who are around aren't feeling all low that they're in a remedial class. They try to make the best of it. They feel they were set back, so they are going to prove to the instructors that they can move on and do better. You really want to do something.

DBS: When you refer to your reading, writing, and math courses, do you say remedial or developmental?

TOYA: Developmental, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I don't worry about what people say.

DBS: Do you ever refer to them as remedial courses?

- TOYA: I say developmental courses.
- DBS: Why do you use developmental?
- TOYA: Because, once I got to the University and I was advised they did not call it remedial. They called it Developmental Studies to help you to the next step towards your next courses. I don't take it as remedial.
- DBS: How did you feel about being placed in the remedial program?
- TOYA: Well, maybe reading, but I really didn't need the other two. I don't know what kind of scores they were using.
- DBS: Do you feel that your remedial courses have addressed your needs academically?
- TOYA: Just one, and that's reading. That's the only class that's helping me. My writing and math are absolutely a breeze. I know most of the materials already.
- DBS: Did you have any hard feelings about being in the writing and math?
- TOYA: Well, yeah. At the beginning, I wasn't putting forth any effort. You know, everyone was like she's this and that. I didn't have to bring the book home to study because I knew the material already, so it was like wasting my time. I started making the best of it.
- DBS: What made you have that turn around in attitude?
- TOYA: Okay! At first I really didn't work hard, but I looked in the catalog and saw my next course required and what was going to be taught. They were teaching exactly what we needed to learn for the next courses, so I started taking heed and really started paying attention. I started improving my

faults. I knew the material, but there's never enough education, so I just kept reviewing and reviewing.

DBS: How do you feel about the courses now that it's midway through the semester?

TOYA: Well, I would recommend it to anyone just coming out of high school and feel that they're not college material. I felt I was college material since I went to Upward Bound for three years. We were already cued to the system, but I'd advise it to anyone. It's not going to hold you back, because when I talk to other people who've taken developmental courses, they say they are really advanced in their English course and all the rest of those courses because they were refreshed. These are students who have had the courses and gone on, so they feel pretty good about what they've learned?

DBS: Are you still enrolled in three remedial courses?

TOYA: Yes.

DBS: How do you feel your chances are for exiting those courses this semester?

TOYA: Not trying to brag; okay, I'm not modest. I know I'm going to exit because I wasn't supposed to take any developmental classes. I made a point of knowing what I had to do to get out of those classes. I did all my work and kept up with the timelines in each class.

DBS: What were the timelines?

TOYA: Well, just finishing the units and passing the tests every time you are supposed to. I know most of the work, but I study for my tests as often as I can so I can make at least an 80. That's pretty high but it doesn't bother me because I can do the work,

especially when I know what I'm studying for. I just know I wasn't supposed to take the developmental classes.

DBS: Why did you take the developmental courses?

TOYA: I had to take them because I didn't have an extra copy of my ACT, and then they were going to have to be mailed to the school. It was going to take some time, so I had to take the remedials.

DBS: How late were you when you entered the University?

TOYA: Two weeks.

DBS: Did they just automatically assign you to the reading, writing, and math?

TOYA: Yes.

DBS: How did you feel about the required courses?

TOYA: I didn't want to do that. I felt like I've taken my ACT's. I've paid my dues. I made a twenty. I couldn't expect them to believe that without documentation, and the University wouldn't accept a fax. I didn't want to take anymore tests. I didn't mind. It was really my fault. I should have kept a copy of my ACT.

DBS: Why did you leave USL?

TOYA: It wasn't my choice. My mom said that, "I had never been away from home, and it was my first time in college." She thought that was two negatives against me. She would rather I do a semester at home and get used to college life, then I could transfer. I never attended USL, but I had my classes, had enrolled for 18 hours, no remedials and had my dormitory room and roommate. We both were 18 years old, and I think we had a lot

in common. I had everything ready and two days before I was supposed to leave she said I couldn't go.

DBS: What kind of GPA did you have in high school?

TOYA: I graduated with a 3.2, the top twenty percent of my high school class. I took a lot of courses to prepare me for college.

DBS: What courses?

TOYA: Algebra, English, foreign language, science and classes like that. I didn't waste my time taking some of those easy classes like sewing.

DBS: Are you saying that it really didn't bother you that you had to take these remedial/developmental courses?

TOYA: I just decided to make the best of it. I'm not the type of person to let anything knock me down. I try to make the best of everything. I try to look positive towards everything.

DBS: Have you had any problems?

TOYA: At first, my classmates said that I thought I was this and that, but then they came around. I was willing to help anybody who needed to be helped, and I even do it now. If they need help, I'm more than happy to help. I enjoy it because they feel more comfortable asking me than asking the teacher sometimes, since I'm their peer.

DBS: Would you like to make any closing remarks?

TOYA: Well, I would like to say that if anyone who is listening has to take developmental courses, don't feel down, think positive, do what you have to do. I guarantee nine times out of ten you're going to do much better in English 111 than the kids coming straight

out of high school. I feel that the requirement for taking Developmental Studies, well I don't like it all based on your A.C.T.'s. Some people do not test well, and some people can not take standardized tests and are just as smart as possible. I think it should be something written or an interview. I understand what some people say about transcripts, that some people could just give A's, but I think an interview really suffices. You can tell a lot about a person being articulate.

DBS: Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B

JAN

- DBS: How many years have you been out of high school?
- JAN: One-half year. This is my first semester here.
- DBS: Did you come to the University straight from high school?
- JAN: Yes.
- DBS: How would you describe your high school preparation?
- JAN: It was helpful. It helped to prepare me a little for college life.
- DBS: What kind of courses did you take in high school?
- JAN: Math, English, the basics.
- DBS: What kind of ACT score did you have?
- JAN: A fourteen (14).
- DBS: When you came to the university, you had to take a series of tests. Did you know the purpose of those test?
- JAN: No. Not at the time.
- DBS: When did you find out the purpose of the test?
- JAN: The day after the tests one of the instructors told us they were to determine whether you needed developmental courses or not. That's when I found out what they were for.
- DBS: How did you feel at that time?

- JAN: I was nervous, and I was afraid to take the test. I think I could have done better, but I was really nervous.
- DBS: When did you discover you were going to be placed in these remedial courses?
- JAN: When I came to get my schedule.
- DBS: How many courses were you required to take?
- JAN: Twelve hours.
- DBS: How many remedial classes were you required to take?
- JAN: Three.
- DBS: Reading, Writing, and Math?
- JAN: Yes.
- DBS: How did you feel at registration when you found out that you had to take three remedial classes?
- JAN: I was angry. I was very, very angry and upset.
- DBS: When you entered the classroom, did your attitude affect your participation?
- JAN: No. I learned that some of the things I thought I knew from high school, well, I really didn't know, and it helped me to learn what I didn't know. Now I think I'm much better than what I would be.
- DBS: Do you ever talk about your reading activities?
- JAN: Sometimes, with my friends or people in the class.
- DBS: How do you refer to your class-remedial or developmental?

- JAN: Developmental because that's what they call it here. I called it remedial before I came to the University because they are really like high school courses.
- DBS: If you had a choice, would you elect to take the remedial courses or go on into your regular courses?
- JAN: I would rather be in remedial courses, since I now know there are things I need to brush up on.
- DBS: What are your career aspirations? What do you plan to do with the education you're getting now?
- JAN: With the education I'm getting now, I plan to pursue a career in forensic medicine.
- DBS: How do you assess what you've done thus far? Do you think you'll be exiting the remedial classes?
- JAN: Yes.
- DBS: This semester?
- JAN: Yes, this semester.
- DBS: With what kind of grades?
- JAN: With a B.
- DBS: What unit are you on in Math?
- JAN: I'm on unit nine (9), so I know I'll be repeating that one.
- DBS: What about reading and writing?
- JAN: I'll be exiting those too.
- DBS: Is there a difference in the teachers you have here at the university versus the teachers you had in high school?

JAN: Yes. Here I find the work is more independent. They help you at first, and then they tell you that you're on your own. They push you to do the work. If you do the work fine and if you don't that's on you. They remind you all the time how it's on you. They basically have the attitude they don't care. They have theirs, and it's up to you to get yours. In high school the teachers do everything for you. All you need to do is go to school. The troublemakers get the most of the attention, I just listened.

DBS: Is this in remedial courses that you have this attitude?

JAN: Yes.

DBS: Well, what made your attitude return to a positive one if they had this kind of attitude?

JAN: Basically, I just dealt with it. I didn't let their negativity get me down because I knew I had to get out of there, and if I was negative I would never get out.

DBS: What motivated you to get out of the class?

JAN: A girlfriend of mine who's not in remedial and the things she's doing in her math class, well, I can do already. It's challenging for me because when she's stuck with something I can go there and show her how to work the problems, so it makes me want to get out and get into the work she's doing.

DBS: How do you feel knowing that you're in remedial classes and can already do the required of work successfully?

- JAN: My attitude hasn't changed about myself.
I'm just dealing with it one day at a time.
I know within myself I can get out of there,
so I won't let it get me down.
- DBS: Do you feel your friends treat you
differently because you're in remedial
courses?
- JAN: No.
- DBS: Is there anything you'd like to change about
the whole placement process.
- JAN: The thing I would change is before a person
takes the test they should be told what the
test is for, so they could prepare
themselves for it and not be faced with a
spur of the moment type thing.
- DBS: How do you feel about the required testing
to assess whether you need remedial courses
or not?
- JAN: I think that should change. You should be
allowed to take the test a second time in
order to bring your score up if you need it.
It's unfair to have everything count on that
one time.
- DBS: Do you feel that the remedial courses are
helping you to reach your career goal?
- JAN: At first, no. But now, maybe I am learning
some new things and doing what I am supposed
to do to get out. I don't want to repeat
these remedials.
- DBS: Anything you would like to say that I didn't
ask you or any closing comments?
- JAN: No, not really.
- DBS: Well, I wish you the best on your final
exams, and I thank you for the interview.

APPENDIX C

DONNA

- DBS: How would you evaluate your high school experiences?
- DONNA: Starting from ninth grade I had regular courses; Algebra I, English, General Science, P.E. Tenth grade I had Geometry, Algebra II. I failed Algebra II, so I had to take it over in the eleventh grade.
- DBS: Were you in the college prep curriculum, or regular curriculum?
- DONNA: It was basically college preparatory, because my counselor told me we had to have the foreign language and physics to meet the requirements of any university or college, so I had to have those subjects also.
- DBS: How long had you been out of high school before enrolling in Southern?
- DONNA: I started college the year I graduated, 1989. I went to Dillard University.
- DBS: When you were at Dillard, did you need any remedial courses?
- DONNA: They told me from the placement test that I had tested out of remedial courses, and straight into regular college courses. When I took the placement test here, I had to take remedial math, reading, and writing.
- DBS: Let's talk about your experiences in the remedial program.
- DONNA: Okay.
- DBS: When you first came to the University, did you feel that you would have to take any remedial courses at all?

DONNA: Not at first, but when I found out I had to I just went along with it, and I found that they helped.

DBS: Okay, you went along with it. Were you ready for the kind of experiences that you had to undergo as far as the testing?

DONNA: Yes. At Dillard you had to take test, and they were taken in the gym with just about the whole school, so a lot of people didn't bother me. Entrance exams at Warren Easton were the same, so the environment didn't bother me. I think testing is really on the individual. You just have to know how to take tests.

DBS: So when you came here, how many remedial courses were you required to take?

DONNA: Right now I'm only taking one.

DBS: Initially, how many did you have to take?

DONNA: Three.

DBS: What were they?

DONNA: Reading, writing and math.

DBS: How did you feel about the classes at first?

DONNA: The math and writing I thought were too easy, and I wished I would have passed them before Thanksgiving. I had a definite A. With reading, I knew it was going to be a problem, and it was. This is my second semester in there.

DBS: What made the math and writing so easy for you?

DONNA:: When I was in the fourth grade in Houston, I had to do a lot of writing, and the teachers were behind me, pushing me, so they helped me understand and get through the classes.

I also had to go to a math lab, which helped slow math learners, like me, to keep up with the rest of the class and not to fall behind. I excelled in them. Writing and math skills just come easy.

DBS: How did you feel when you realized these were skills that you already knew?

DONNA: At first, I was a little intimidated, but I said if I show them this is too easy, then they'll say you can test out and go to your regular courses. That didn't happen. I couldn't go into a regular English course until I passed writing or reading which is keeping me behind in English. The reading part, well, Mrs. Morgan says if it was just based on the writing scores I should have been finished, but it is partly my reading skills-mostly comprehension.

DBS: How do you feel about participating in the remedial program?

DONNA: Well, it's okay, but I know it's going to take me longer to finish from here. I plan to go to the summer sessions to catch up.

DBS: How do you see your overall participation in the Developmental program?

DONNA: When I started, I thought it was just something else put in the way, something stopping me from going into my major, and something, something stopping me from doing some real productive work. But, when I was going through the class with Mrs. Townsel, I realized that some of the things she was talking about I had never heard of. Some of the people in class remembered from high school. I said, not from my high school. When I had the class the second semester with Dr. Williams, it was the vocabulary part of class that always got me. I never did understand all the prefixes, suffixes and stuff like that. I think the more I

took it; the easier it got because I kept hearing things and kept studying. I finally passed the vocabulary test, and now I'm working on the rest of the class which is coming pretty easy, but it still has it's difficulties.

DBS: You said, "at first," you "were a little intimidated." How do you feel about your participation in the program now?

DONNA: Well, the information I'm getting is really the foundation for my English classes. The techniques, study habits and things I get out of both reading and writing class will help me to excel in English. To me, it's the grading system. The grading system in Developmental Studies is very strict, and kind of hard to meet. In other classes it's C's. You need at least an 80 to get out.

DBS: They use the name (they being the Administration, the people in Junior Division) Developmental, and in a similar program Student Support Services. Do you ever think of them as remedial or developmental classes? DONNA:: Remedial classes, classes that you pay for, but there's no college credit in them. It's just another obstacle to set you back, and you're going to be in college until you're ninety. That was my first mind, but after I got into it, my opinions changed, and I went along with the flow.

DBS: When you're outside the classroom talking with your friends, does the group refer to the program as remedial or developmental?

DONNA: Developmental.

DBS: Do you prefer hearing remedial or developmental when some refers to your reading, writing, and math classes?

DONNA: Neither one. Developmental sounds like a

put down, kind of like when you hear special education. You automatically think of slow learners, that mentally something is wrong that has prevented them from learning at the same rate that you learn, and it's just the way people poke fun. It's just my opinion, but some people poke fun, and you try not to let them see that it doesn't set right.

DBS: Do they tease you or make fun of you, if you're taking remedial courses?

DONNA: Not everybody, but some of the people who are in it, and they've been in it longer than I have. I feel like they need to see it in a different light, as something that's going to help bring them up and make them more productive. They see the classes as a joke because they think that they know everything.

DBS: The people who are teasing you, have they had any remedial courses at all?

DONNA: Most of them have, and like I said most of them have been in it longer than I have.

DBS: Then why are they making fun of it?

DONNA: Just to poke fun, or just something to do since they haven't passed their final tests yet.

DBS: Are there any comments you'd like to make before we end this interview session?

DONNA: I think the program is a good program. I think she's okay. She asks us a lot of questions, and we ask her questions too, all of the time. I always have questions. The teachers that are in it are excellent teachers, but there could be a little more help from other teachers. Your regular classes math and English, I think they could be a little more helpful.

DBS: Helpful how? When you're doing what?

DONNA: Like when you go to the math lab in the
 administration building on the third floor,
 instead of the helpers sitting there looking
 at you like you're supposed to already know
 it. You wouldn't go in there if you didn't
 need help. I just don't like the way they
 handle the math lab. It deters me from
 going. I try to find other people who've
 been in math and ask them.

DBS: Well, thank you very much.

APPENDIX D

TONI

DBS: Tell me something about yourself.

TONI: Well, I am not a real honor student, and I never have been. I went to a catholic grammar school and high school. I never failed a grade or anything like that. I took the A.C.T., and it is my second semester in remedials.

DBS: What kind of academic preparations did you have in high school, were you in a college prep program?

TONI: College prep, but I never failed a class at school, but I always did enough to pass. I never really did much; I am not slow or anything. I just didn't do my work really.

DBS: Did you do just enough to pass?

TONI: Yes, enough to graduate on time and everything.

DBS: How do you feel about having had to take the placement tests?

TONI: I didn't think it was necessary.

DBS: Why?

TONI: They already had a copy of my high school grades and a copy of my A.C.T. scores. If they was going to put me in the remedials, they should of just done it. I didn't need to waste my time taking more tests. I didn't have a choice.

DBS: What kind of choice?

TONI: I couldn't pick my classes. I had to take the remedials. The test was something they used to say, yes, you need these classes.

- DBS: How did you feel when you were mandated to take the remedial courses?
- TONI: What?
- DBS: How did you feel when you realized you had to take remedial courses?
- TONI: To tell you the truth, I couldn't believe it. I asked the lady if I could see my scores. I know I wasn't the best student in school, but hey, I wasn't the worst either. I just could not believe it.
- DBS: How did you feel when you had to take remedial reading?
- TONI: I was rather upset, because it was something I always had and you know it's like wasting time to me. I could have gone into my college courses and everything that I just didn't do what I had to do to get ready.
- DBS: Is reading the only class/course you had to take?
- TONI: No, I had to take all three, writing and math also.
- DBS: Do you feel you have been successful this semester?
- TONI: I am very successful this semester. I had a different attitude this semester, and I think it has a lot to do with my teacher because I didn't take the same lady I took last semester and then it has a lot to do with a friend in the class.
- DBS: What about the teacher making you feel successful this semester?
- TONI: I mean it's like , you know, she puts focus on you, you know, like do this and she doesn't spoon feed me. Don't get me wrong, but it was like if we have a test Thursday,

well, she's not going to tell me Tuesday of the same week. She's going to tell me the Tuesday ahead and prepare me with this study guide. She's going over the work in class, and I'm doing my homework, you know, things like that. It wasn't like I was just on my own out in the world by myself.

DBS: You mentioned a friend--How did the friend support you?

TONI: She's an older person, you know, she is older and more experienced, and it was like you know--get it while you can --while you're here. When I first thought about college, I thought it was a joke. I went out into the real world flipping burgers. Now I have kids, a job and now I have to be back in college. And I could have had a career and everything by now. But, I took it as a joke, so get it while you can.

DBS: How do you define success in reading?

TONI: Passing all my tests when I don't do so well on a test, going to the teacher in her office, explaining to her what happened. Can I retake it--retake the test, passing it again. And right now, I have all A's and B's in my folder.

DBS: How do you feel about your chance of exiting the class?

TONI: I am out of there.

DBS: How do you feel about the material being used to help you in the class?

TONI: I think they were really good materials because I see it's words, you see, but you don't pay any attention to them. I mean I can use different words now, and it would mean the same thing as saying what I've been saying, but it is just a whole different way. And sometimes people would use a word

you think is a big \$20.00 word, and it is nothing but a little 10 cent word. It's just that I didn't know anything about it; it means the same thing.

DBS: Do you feel successful because you've been able to use and understand certain things (words) prior to the course?

TONI: Yes, I feel really good about my class because my teacher is not only my teacher; she's my friend. I can tell her that I am having problems with this and that and I ask her if I can meet with her in her office, or can we do this, can we do that? I ask all sorts of questions. She gives me all kinds of worksheets with the words on it-whatever. So, that's why I feel successful. That's why I feel comfortable or even satisfied with my class.

DBS: Was the teacher available?

TONI: Oh yes! A lot.

DBS: Did you go outside the classroom in need of support?

TONI: No.

DBS: Were you disappointed that it took you 2 semesters to get out of reading?

TONI: Well, if I would have got out last semester I don't think I would have gotten anything out of it because really my teacher didn't give me anything, and I didn't give her anything back. So, if I would have got out last semester it would have been really nothing.

DBS: What were your expectations for the course prior to your enrolling in reading or any other remedial course?

TONI: Well, when I thought about reading I thought

I was going to get in front of the class and read this story. I know I can read aloud, but I know I'm not going to project my voice, so I just thought it was that, but now, come to find out it is vocabulary, comprehension and so on and so forth. You really have to work in the class and apply yourself and not just read aloud.

DBS: Was that a pleasant surprise?

TONI: Yes.

DBS: What are the teacher's expectations in the reading course?

TONI: They expect you to be adults, but then they will hold your hand. Alright, in the beginning of the semester, they will hold your hand and let you go on and let you go. And right now I am walking by myself and I really feel strong. I don't feel like I am going to fall and I am not even looking back.

DBS: I can tell you are very excited and confident of your accomplishments.

TONI: Very.

DBS: Do you have any closing remarks?

TONI: Well, all I have to say is that if you have to take remedials don't think well I am dumber than the rest of them, you know, everybody else. Just go in there and do what you have to do, and just think of it as I am getting an extra step. I have an extra semester to learn what I maybe didn't get, so just go in there and do what you will to get out.

DBS: How old are you?

TONI: 18.

DBS: Did you come directly from high school to college?

TONI: Yes.

DBS: Thank you for this interview.

APPENDIX E

BRAD

- DBS: Would you please state your name for the record.
- BRAD: My name is Brad W. Harris.
- DBS: How many years have you been out of high school?
- BRAD: Approximately fifteen.
- DBS: What motivated you to enroll at the University?
- BRAD: I can only go so high in the field I'm in without a college education. I know the work; I have the experience, but I don't have a degree.
- DBS: Well, what is your field or current occupation?
- BRAD: I would rather not say. I am a recovering alcoholic.
- DBS: Are you a full-time or part-time student?
- BRAD: Full-time.
- DBS: Since you are returning to school after fifteen years, did you know anything about the reading, writing and mathematics courses?
- BRAD: Not a lot. I knew that they were remedials and would help me with those things I know I had forgotten.
- DBS: Why did you say remedial and not developmental?
- BRAD: I really don't know. I guess I hear

- remedial more than developmental.
DBS: Which one do you prefer?
- BRAD: Either or. They both mean the same--don't they?
- DBS: How did you feel about the placement process?
- BRAD: I didn't have any problems with the process. It identified where my weak areas were and what I needed to strengthen, so that process wasn't a problem.
- DBS: How do you feel about being required to participate in a remedial program?
- BRAD: Like I said before, the two classes I was in I knew I had to be in. I was uncomfortable in the beginning, cause I didn't know just how much I needed to learn, or how much I didn't need. Since I've been in the remedial classes, I've retained an A average. Evidently, I didn't need it as badly as I thought I did.
- DBS: Did your opinion about the classes change when you realized you didn't need to take remedial courses?
- BRAD: Yeah. I wish I had gone on to Algebra III and English III. I wouldn't have had to wait a semester to start taking regular classes.
- DBS: How would you describe your high school preparation.
- BRAD: I went to three different high schools, but all of them were excellent high schools.
- DBS: At the time that you were in high school, were there different tracks like college prep or general education?
- BRAD: Yes.

DBS: What curriculum were you assigned?

BRAD: College Prep.

DBS: What kind of average did you have upon graduation?

BRAD: B average.

DBS: How many remedial courses did you need?

BRAD: Two. English and Math.

DBS: How many semesters have you been in the remedial program?

BRAD: This is my first semester.

DBS: Do you feel you will exit the program this semester?

BRAD: Yes.

DBS: In what courses?

BRAD: Both English and math.

DBS: Do you see the remedial programs as something that is addressing your academic needs?

BRAD: It made it easier for me to adapt to college life but it wasn't necessary. The teachers really care. They help you when you ask a question. You just have to ask a question. You really don't feel scared when you need to ask a question. Since I've been in it, and now I'm getting out, well I don't think it was necessary. There's a stipulation that you have to go back into your remedial courses, and if you pass them, then you can move on and try to get a regular class. That's where my problem lies because I've held an A average in English and Math all through, so now I'm being stagnated. I'm going to be pre-advised back into those

courses again, and when I get out and show them I got an A then I'll have to go fight that train to find a class that's open in Math and English in order to move on. I work, and I have a real short school schedule, and trying to fit in morning classes is hard. I caught hell this semester. I don't want to go through this again. Because I'm in remedial class they say I've failed until I show them I've passed, and then I can move on. I still have big problems with that.

DBS: What is the source of that problem?

BRAD: It's telling me I've failed even before I have, so if I was borderline that would make me give up and go through it another semester because they didn't think I could pass, and I wouldn't think I could pass so I wouldn't pass. This college gives a lot of support, but then it contradicts itself when it says we know you can make it, but you're not going to make it so do it again.

DBS: If you could change any one thing about mandatory participation in the remedial program, what would you change?

BRAD: In the whole picture, I'd leave it up to the individual as to whether or not upon entry they would go to remedial courses or not. No one knows like you know whether you can make it or not. If I had made the decision I would have taken the remedial courses, but I didn't have the choice. The decision was made for me. Mainly, I would change the pre-advisement procedure. If I'm being pre-advised for another semester let me move. If I was failing the class I would be the first one to say I should stay in the class another semester.

DBS: What do you think would be the benefits of a student electing to take remedial courses versus someone who is mandated to take it?

BRAD: Their attitude would be more positive and they would work harder at it because they made that choice.

DBS: What was your attitude at first?

BRAD: At first, I felt I probably needed the classes. The instructors were great, and I obtained a lot of confidence to go into my III courses. The only part that bothers me is after you've gone through the whole process and you're doing good, they tell you that you may fail so why don't you go back.

DBS: How did this affect your attitude in the classroom?

BRAD: It turned negative.

DBS: When?

BRAD: After midterm, that's when we were told we would have to go back through. After that point I could have gone down hill, but I didn't because I know what my goals are.

DBS: Is there anything you'd like to say? Would you mind if I asked your age?

BRAD: I'm 32.

DBS: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to interview you.

APPENDIX F

RAY

- DBS: Academic background/ What kind of courses did you take?
- RAY: I took the basic courses- English, Reading, Math. But when I kind of got to my senior year I kind of just laid back and just passed without reaching my goal.
- DBS: What kind of math did you take in high school?
- RAY: Algebra II, regular classes.
- DBS: For this interview, would you prefer my using remedial or developmental in referring to the reading, writing, and math courses?
- RAY: It don't matter.
- DBS: Why?
- RAY: They both mean the same.
- DBS: When you graduated, how prepared did you feel for college?
- RAY: To tell you the truth I felt I was not prepared. It was mainly my fault because I didn't know what I wanted to do. I still really don't know what to do. I just want to do better.
- DBS: Why did you feel you weren't necessarily prepared for college--academically, financially or both?
- RAY: Really, academically because I didn't try hard in my senior year. It was really my fault. And, then it was my fault again because I sat out after I got out of school. I sat out a whole year.

- DBS: What kind of grades did you have for you to say that you know that you didn't try hard enough?
- RAY: I had C's, and I know that I could have done better than that. But it was, I guess, I was getting tired of school and everything.
- DBS: How did your teachers react? Did anybody encourage you?
- RAY: They did, but I just wanted to get out at that particular point and time.
- DBS: How old were you when you enrolled at the University?
- RAY: 19 years old--I was 19.
- DBS: What prompted you to come to the University at that time?
- RAY: Because right now I have a dead end job. I don't see myself progressing, and school is the only thing that I could see, you know, that would get me ahead in life.
- DBS: What did you do from the time you graduated up until the time you enrolled?
- RAY: Working.
- DBS: What kind of jobs?
- RAY: I'm into fast-foods, right now, I am at Taco-Bell. And that's where I've been since I graduated from school. I now go to work and school. It's rough, but I'm hanging.
- DBS: How many remedial courses (classes) did you have to take?
- RAY: All of them really - reading, English, Math.

- DBS: How did you feel when you were told that you had tested into all 3?
- RAY: I knew that I was going to test into all 3. I knew that because I had forgotten most of the things that I had learned in school. I need the courses, and I need the help.
- DBS: How do you feel about having had to take placement tests?
- RAY: Do you mean the tests we took at the beginning of the semester?
- DBS: Yes.
- RAY: I knew I was going to take something. I just didn't think the test showed all I know and learned. I knew I would have to take one remedial class, maybe all three.
- DBS: What semester is this for you?
- RAY: This my second semester.
- DBS: What prevented you from exiting the course the first semester?
- RAY: I got to the point at mid-term where it started getting kind of, not hard, but I started getting frustrated. I don't know why. I just started getting frustrated at some of the grades I was getting and then I stopped coming.
- DBS: Who was your teacher last semester?
- RAY: Mrs. Day.
- DBS: Describe your classroom environment.
- RAY: She was a good teacher; she's a good instructor, but at that point, like I said, I was feeling frustrated, you know, I probably could have passed if I had tried harder. I believe she told me that, you

know, if I would have taken more tests and everything, but I just got frustrated.

DBS: What about the class now that you have Mrs. Morgan?

RAY: Her teaching style is unique and everything, but I feel as though it is not the teacher; it is the person. You have to really want to learn. I feel better about myself now. I am really trying harder. I feel as though I want to do something, you know. And at that time, mid-term - I was feeling frustrated and I was kind of getting frustrated this mid-term, but I started studying a little more.

DBS: What do you think made the difference?

RAY: Because I see myself not progressing in life. I want more stuff for me.

DBS: Do you think participating in the program (remedial) will help you accomplish your goals.

RAY: Oh , yes definitely! It's like getting another chance to do everything right, especially this semester.

DBS: What has participation in this class done for you?

RAY: Like I said, it has made me try for higher goals.

DBS: You mentioned a lot about being frustrated. What do you think is the source of your frustration?

RAY: Maybe I wasn't taking it seriously enough. See at the time I was working, and it was kind of interfering with my school work and everything. And I wasn't studying, and I would come to class and so the teacher would say we have a test, and I would just get

frustrated and I would fail it. Or, I would just make a 65% or something like that and still fail it.

DBS: I've noticed that Mrs. Morgan uses a conversational tone. Did most of your teachers teach in the same manner?

RAY: Yes.

DBS: So, this is nothing new to you.

RAY: Nothing new at all

DBS: How do you like the selection of reading materials?

RAY: I like them; they are very interesting.

DBS: If you could change your reading materials, what would you change?

RAY: To tell you the truth I would not change anything because the Malcolm X book really educated me as to what was going on then and the stuff that was happening in his life. And I really didn't know too much about him.

DBS: Do you like the vocabulary book?

RAY: Yes

DBS: How does your instructor react or respond to your questions and frustrations?

RAY: Well the instructor that I have right now is about the same as last semester.

DBS: What do you mean?

RAY: Honestly, I feel comfortable with the class already. I probably can ask her a certain question at any time, and when I feel

comfortable with something, I stick with it from start to finish, so I plan to stick with it. You just couldn't be scared when you need to ask a question.

DBS: How would you describe your classroom?

RAY: I would describe it as warm, you know, as far as the teacher and students are concerned. Yes.

DBS: What is it you would like to see different in the classroom?

RAY: Nothing. The overhead is all right. It really doesn't make a difference to me because I try to retain a knowledge of everything. I try to write down everything she says.

DBS: Do you like to read?

RAY: When it is interesting.

DBS: Have you found many selections that are interesting to you this semester?

RAY: To tell you the truth, Malcolm X book is the only one that I was reading right now that is interesting.

DBS: Do you read outside of the assigned materials?

RAY: No, but I should.

DBS: What are you goals or plans after you exit the courses?

RAY: To tell you the truth, right now, I am trying to just get out of remedials. Right now, trying to see if I can hang with it and everything. I believe I could. I am just

trying to take it one step at a time, you know. After I get out of the remedials then I could tell you what happens, you know, what my goals are in life.

DBS: O.K. So your immediate goal is to pass the remedial courses.

RAY: I'm trying to get at the starting line. It is, you know, like I'm in training for something.

DBS: Do you have any closing remarks?

RAY: No.

DBS: Thank you for your time and the interview.

APPENDIX G

CORA

- DBS: Why did you delay coming to school?
- CORA: I delayed because I am in the service right now, the army, and I left for a while to go across seas. And I came back and I figured that it was time that I do something for myself to progress further.
- DBS: Was it a financial problem or did you just want to go into the service?
- CORA: Well, I was in the service already, and I was unfortunately called to duty so that delayed my plans, but I had plans to come to school right after I graduated.
- DBS: What are your goals now at the university?
- CORA: My goal is to come to college and to better myself, to not to depend on anyone but myself as to do things on my own as a mature adult.
- DBS: How would you describe your high school experiences?
- CORA: My high school experiences were okay. They could have been better, but as far as preparation for college, I think I was adequately prepared.
- DBS: How would you describe the classroom environment?
- CORA: They were very warm; it was with the teachers who cared more about the students and they wanted to see the students better themselves more than the student himself, so that was one of my strongest points.

- DBS: Do you feel that you were encouraged to strive a little bit more as a class or as an individual?
- CORA: I feel I should strive as an individual, you know, every person is his own person so its his decision on what he wants to do with his life or their lives. No one can really make us learn but us.
- DBS: How many remedial classes are you currently enrolled in?
- CORA: (Only one) I am taking one-reading.
- DBS: Is that all that you needed when you first enrolled here at the university?
- CORA: I knew, you know, that I had forgotten some of the stuff before I came to college so I automatically took them to refresh my memory and to take it from there.
- DBS: So, how many remedial classes/courses have you taken so far?
- CORA: I took all 3.
- DBS: How many semesters have you been here at the university?
- CORA: This is my second semester.
- DBS: So, you took writing and math and tested out of them at the end of the semester.
- CORA: Correct, correct.
- DBS: Did you take reading last semester?
- CORA: No, I couldn't fit it into my schedule.
- DBS: So, is this your first time in the course?
- CORA: Correct.

- DBS: How did you feel about taking all three remedial courses?
- CORA: Well, at first when I came, you have that feeling that 'wow' I wasn't prepared as I thought you know. Stuff you just forgot or didn't know. But now that I am taking them, I feel, hey, I am glad that I did take them because it helped me to improve my education.
- DBS: Compare this remedial classroom environment with your high school environment.
- CORA: Basically, seriousness, everyone is more serious about their education and in high school where you just played around, went to class and you didn't bother to study, but you just passed as you went along.
- DBS: How would you compare Mrs. Morgan's teaching style to your high school teachers?
- CORA: Well, her teaching style is unique. I've had teachers with her style but hers is on a more collegiate level and everything.
- DBS: How do you define unique? What makes it different?
- CORA: Back in high school, you know the teacher teaches you, but here she lets you teach yourself--you know, you advance at your own level. She doesn't push you, or she doesn't hold you back; it's all up to you.
- DBS: How do you feel about that?
- CORA: I feel it is good because it doesn't put as much pressure on you, you know, you can work at your own pace. You don't have to keep up with the teacher, so I find it nice.
- DBS: How would you describe your classroom environment?

- CORA: It could be better, you know. I am more of a person who wants to strive forward and some of the people in different classes, well, it's just like high school. They are just here just to be here.
- DBS: What about the reading class--is everyone as serious as you are?
- CORA:: No.
- DBS: How do you see yourself as compared to others in this class?
- CORA:: I see myself praying on everything or how should I say this--coping with this, well, I feel, hey, I don't want to be like this; I want to be like Jerry in the corner by himself in his books and not like Susan talking and gossiping.
- DBS: Does the teacher say anything to those who are disruptive?
- CORA: Well, our class is not really that disruptive, you know. Everybody in the class pays attention and listens but sometimes most of them just fade away instead of just sticking with it.
- DBS: Fade away from the class?
- CORA: No, fade away from her teaching; they might do other things like talking or whatever.
- DBS: Why do you think they do that?
- CORA: Well, honestly, when I was in high school, I used to think the class was boring, you know, the teacher was boring, so I found something else to do. I would sleep or read magazines or do whatever.
- DBS: What causes you to pay attention and not stray off and do other things?

CORA: The future because the future holds many possibilities if you work at it, you know.

DBS: If you had to change anything about your learning environment in your reading class, what would you change?

CORA:: Basically, I wouldn't change nothing in my classroom because I feel comfortable with it, and you learn something everyday. I am comfortable with the style. All you need to do is ask questions, and I do--I definitely do.

DBS: How do you feel about the reading materials?

CORA: I am very pleased because I am active reader. I read outside class too, so, you know, I have an edge on everybody else. But the materials we read, I feel very comfortable with them because they are educational.

DBS: How do you feel about Malcolm X? Had you read his autobiography prior to your enrolling in the reading?

CORA: Yes, I guess you can say history. I know about people like that, but reading his autobiography I learned stuff that I didn't even know.

DBS: What is your purpose for being here at the university?

CORA: Well, basically, it may not sound right the way I say it but I want respect because the minority is the main generation today. You have to respect yourself to get respect. And, I am here to go out into the world and gain respect for myself and for my peers, you know.

DBS: Do you feel that you have the kind of environment that supports that attitude here in reading?

- CORA: Yes, but I feel in certain ways it could be better.
- DBS: What would you do to make it better?
- CORA: Let everyone get involved. It is a joint effort; it is not an individual effort. Everyone is here for the same purpose and that's to get an education.
- DBS: Everyone--meaning students?
- CORA: Students and instructors because instructors learn daily from students and students learn daily from instructors.
- DBS: What do instructors learn from students?
- CORA: It's hard to say. Everybody brings something different to the classroom, you know, and you just learn from their experiences, even the teachers.
- DBS: Do you feel that Mrs. Morgan is involved enough?
- CORA: Yes, I feel that she is very involved. She gets very involved in the class, you know.
- DBS: How do you like it when she recites different lines and passages from other reading materials?
- CORA: It makes me feel very comfortable because you see from her background that she is very educated. She educated herself mostly and did not have to depend on school for education. She is self-educated.
- DBS: How do you feel when she ties in her personal experiences with what you are learning?
- CORA: I feel personal experiences is the best experience because if you don't go through

it yourself, you'll never know. All you will know is say so or here say.

DBS: Does it make it more relevant for you?

CORA: Correct, because you will know what to expect and what you will get out of it.

DBS: How do you feel about the lab environment? You have one teacher teaching on one side and you're on the other side. Is it distracting or how do you cope with the noise or anything? Does the structure bother you?

CORA: Well, it doesn't really bother me because if you're into the subject, you block out everything else. You are really interested in what is being spoken to you.

DBS: Do you like the openness of the lab?

CORA: Yes, it is comfortable, and it is better than sitting in a tight and small classroom.

DBS: Do you feel that you don't have to ask questions?

CORA: I need to ask questions; throughout my education I am going to need to ask, but as far as the classroom I feel comfortable.

DBS: What would you change about mandatory participation in a remedial program?

CORA: What do you mean?

DBS: Are there any requirements or any part of it that you would change?

CORA: Definitely the test. It was too long, and I was too tired. I don't think it showed everything I know.

DBS: Do you have any closing remarks?

CORA: No.

DBS: Thank you.

APPENDIX H

GREG

DBS: Greg, please begin by telling me something about yourself and your educational experiences.

GREG: Well, I am from a very large family; it is nine of us. I went to Hardin Elementary, and I left there and went to Wicker where I finished middle school. I attended Peters Jr. High and Warren Easton High School. School was okay. I liked it pretty much.

DBS: What kind of student were you in high school?

GREG: I was a C student.

DBS: What courses did you take that prepared you for the University?

GREG: The regular--I wasn't in honors or nothing like that.

DBS: What motivated you to come to the University?

GREG: My dad--He wanted me to have more than he had. He really got tired of me just working at Popeye's. He said that was a dead road.

DBS: Did you feel prepared for college work?

GREG: I didn't feel I was prepared at all because a lot of people always said that college was very, very hard. And through school, high school and stuff like that, it was real easy to me. It was simple.

DBS: How many remedial classes are you enrolled in?

GREG: Three.

- DBS: How do you feel about the tests that were used to place you in the remedial program?
- GREG: I didn't think too much about it.
- DBS: Why not?
- GREG: I've taken a lot of tests, multiple choice, essay and standardized tests, and I know I don't do good on them. I knew I would have to take all three remedials.
- DBS: How did you feel when you were told that you had to enroll in all three remedial courses?
- GREG: Well, at first, it didn't bother me cause I thought I really had it made. The test seemed easy. I don't know. I thought I was ready for this. I don't know what happened.
- DBS: How do you feel about the names remedial or developmental?
- GREG: It really doesn't matter. Everybody knows that it's for people who are not smart--like in high school. I don't tell too many people what I'm taking.
- DBS: If you had to choose from the three remedial classes, which one would you say has satisfied your goals the most?
- GREG: Reading. It has made me read better. I gear my education towards reading as to, you know, how to pick up on certain things, like before, you know, reading a book sometimes would be hard for me to understand, but taking this class and picturing the clues that she teaches, well, everything just clicks, and the book becomes more interesting as you understand what it is about.
- DBS: Did you say reading because of this interview?

GREG: No.

DBS: What do you expect to get out of this course for this semester?

GREG: More knowledge, you know, to broaden my knowledge on the reading aspect, as far as, like I said understanding what you read.

DBS: Do you like the reading assignments?

GREG: To tell you the truth, yes, because after reading Malcolm X and realizing how he learns with the dictionary and books, I started trying harder. I could tell that a lot of people in the class knew more than me because they talk better. I think they read more. I just used to read off and on, but now I enjoy reading, so, ever so often I have to pick up a book and read it even if it is a little pamphlet or something, you know. The stuff is really interesting.

DBS: What motivates you the most in the classroom?

GREG: What?

DBS: What helps you or forces you to do your best in class?

GREG: I feel as though it is the instructor who helps you a lot. She helps you a lot. I mean she don't let you stay stuck on one thing that you can't understand right away. She helps you to progress in the things that you are doing.

DBS: How would you feel Greg if you didn't get the required score to exit the reading class?

GREG: I would feel upset, but, basically, if you set yourself up to fail, then, you already have failed; you haven't achieved.

DBS: How do you feel about the openness of the

lab--is it distracting to you?

GREG: No, it's just when you pay attention to one instructor you just paying attention to her and only her, you know, and other things don't matter.

DBS: Do you feel that the students support each other in the classroom?

GREG: Some of them-some of them don't; they just are not too serious about things they do.

DBS: Do you have any closing remarks or comments?

GREG: No.

DBS: Thank you for your time and the interview.

APPENDIX I

KYA

- DBS: Kya, what year did you graduate from high school?
- KYA: 1992.
- DBS: Did you come straight from high school to college?
- KYA: Yes, I'm 18.
- DBS: If you had to evaluate yourself, where were you as far as your GPA? How did you do in high school?
- KYA: In high school I had a 2.9. I was a B-, B+ average student.
- DBS: What kind of courses did you take in high school?
- KYA: In my senior year?
- DBS: Yes.
- KYA: I was in a college prep program. I graduated from Xavier University Preparatory Secondary School, so I know I had college prep classes.
- DBS: How did you feel when you came to the University and had to enroll in remedial classes?
- KYA: I was shocked. I wasn't too fond of that because the classes I took at Prep covered all of that. I was truly taught in my classes at school. They don't teach me in my classes here except one, and that's the one I'm lacking. In order for me to excel I have to be taught. It's all right in a way, but I'm not doing what I think I can do.

- DBS: What do you mean exactly when you say you're not being taught?
- KYA: It's the instructors, because the skills are in the book. You can read those and comprehend, but you need that little push. It would help if the teacher got on the chalkboard. Let's say you have a problem in math, she could go to the blackboard and go over the work we have instead of letting us do it all ourselves. We do 95% of the work ourselves, but that 5% is where we need to be pushed. If I don't know it, how am I going to do it?
- DBS: Did your teachers use the chalkboard a lot in high school?
- KYA: Yes, and I really learned a lot.
- DBS: How were you placed in the developmental courses?
- KYA: Through the test. You know. It's the standardized test they give all of us. I'm not very good at it, so I don't think they should place you in those classes based on that. I think they should look at your high school performance. I'm good in math. I've had every math you could name, and I did excellent work in it.
- DBS: What remedial classes were you required to take at the University?
- KYA: Reading, math, and writing.
- DBS: How do you feel about your participation in the program now that it's midway the semester?
- KYA: I went to a counselor to talk about math, and she told me to talk to the teacher. I did, but I didn't get any response, just the same-old lines. She said go to the math department or to the head of the math

department. I just don't know where to go.
I don't know what step to take next.

DBS: What do you want the chair of the math department to do for you?

KYA: I guess, ask them what they can do to help me get through this class, or can they talk to the teacher about how she's teaching her class. It's not just for me, but the people behind me also. No matter what school you came from, you're not going to be able to sit down and do all this work by yourself. If that was the case you wouldn't need the instructor.

DBS: How do you see your participation in the developmental [remedial] program? Do you see it as something that's assisting you with your education?

KYA: Well, it's holding me back really. I can't get into my career. I'm going to be 20 years old two years from now, and I want to be into my career. I know half of this stuff, but the vocabulary class and writing class are just basic English. The math class is like holding me down. You can't move on; you can't get out of it, and it's like you're stuck. We're stuck there until we pass the class, and if we don't pass, we could be there until our junior or senior year. Some people like me aren't good at standardized tests. I can take a test on a sheet of paper and pass it, but that's when I'm writing it down and looking over it. But, on a standardized test, I'm just writing a,b,c,d.

DBS: How did you do on your ACT Test?

KYA: I did good. The first time I made a 19, and the second time I made a 20.

- DBS: Did you know anything about the remedial classes prior to enrolling at the University?
- KYA: No.
- DBS: How did you find out?
- KYA: I found out when I actually got in the classes. I found out again the day we were making our schedules.
- DBS: What about your enthusiasm for school right now?
- KYA: I was excited about school in the beginning, but now, I'm lacking and I really don't know what I want to do now. I don't like coming anymore. Maybe it's because I'm in this class. Why keep going if it's holding me back. I could take it next semester. Last week I missed three or four days, so I went to the doctor and got an excuse for that. I missed math class on purpose because we had a test in there, and I didn't know what was on it. When I came back to class I found out half the class failed.
- DBS: Why didn't you know what was on the test?
- KYA: I didn't know because when we work out the problems with them they make you wait until it's your turn. When it's your turn, she'll go over it once, and if you only have a few problems she'll give you a test. I feel like she should go over this more than once with me. It's not just going to stick that $a + b = c$.
- DBS: What about your reading class?
- KYA: I like my reading class, because me, myself, I like to read. Vocabulary class, that's what it really is. In the vocabulary part, you have to do the definitions, and I find that helpful because my teacher will go over

it. She'll put it in her own sentences. I take good notes and it helps me a lot in the class. She's a very good teacher.

DBS: How does the professor use the words in her own sentences?

KYA: She tells us stories about her life or other books that she has read and she uses the vocabulary words. She really makes you interested. I like to go to my writing classes. It's fun and you learn. You learn when someone is instructing. You learn because you come to school, and you think about what you're doing, and our teacher makes us realize that. You're placed in this class because you're slow, or because of the test. That's what they tell us, and I don't think it's right, but it's fun. There's only one class I don't like. The instructor doesn't do what she's supposed to do. She just comes to class and sits down. She tells you your test score from the last week. We're on Chapter 4 and we have to finish Chapter 12 before we get out of her class. In our reading class and our writing class the instructors go over what we have to do. They bring you back all the way to the beginning like you didn't learn anything in high school. If I didn't learn anything in high school, how did I get out of high school? It was very hard in our high school. They stayed on us. You couldn't get away with nothing. I couldn't even work until my senior year of school, cause I was so up into the books. They made sure you had work everyday. Every single day you came to school you had work to do. That's how I was pushed. You had work, and you turned it in, and they'd go over it. If it was wrong, they'd go over it again. It was a pushy thing. It's not that I want to be spoon-fed, but give me some kind of feedback. Don't treat me like I am in first grade and don't know nothing.

- DBS: Do you feel that you're being encouraged?
- KYA: She discourages us.
- DBS: Are you talking about the remedial program, or just one class?
- KYA: No, just one class. You're being encouraged over there because they tell you that you can use this in the future. You can use this in your classes to come.
- DBS: Are you talking about reading and writing?
- KYA: Yeah! I'm not going to bring up the math class anymore, but she told us we weren't far enough ahead to get out of the class, so we might as well schedule yourself to take it next semester. Don't think you're going to rush to get through this. I don't like going to her class on Tuesday and Thursday. I'd rather sit at home and watch "The Young and The Restless," until it goes off, and then go to school and get to her class late. People in our class come in late anyway.
- DBS: How do you feel about the names developmental and remedial? Which one do you prefer?
- KYA: When I was in high school that was like slow students.
- DBS: Which one?
- KYA: Remedial. It was the class for people who are slow. When I was going to school I was never in a developmental class. They both mean the same to me. It was a shock to me when I got placed in a remedial class. DBS: Do you recall any of your feelings at registration when you were told that you had to take remedial courses.
- KYA: My feelings were hurt, but you do what you have to do if I want to go to college. Some

of us come to college the first semester and don't come back. I really want to do something. If I want to make something of myself, I have to go. It's not like I can say stop here and say KYA, you're not going back to school. I thought about it though. My mom told me to do what I have to do, and don't let it discourage you.

DBS: If you could change anything about the program and the way students participate, what would you change?

KYA: I'd change the testing. I'd change the teachers' way of teaching. Don't teach us like we're graduate students. Help the students, and if you have to take special time out instead of rushing to go home, it's just the little things that count.

DBS: Do you feel there's a stigma attached to you because you're enrolled in the developmental program?

KYA: No, because my mom and family understand. My friends say they had to take them, so don't worry about it. I tell them I don't want to be like you.

DBS: Did the ones who took the class graduate?

KYA: No, they're still here. My cousin is graduating soon. She has to take 18 more hours, since she found out she had to take a minor. On her transcript there was a blank next to her remedial courses. Do you get hours for remedial courses?

DBS: Yes, but it doesn't count towards graduation.

KYA: That's a waste! I'm planning on leaving in August 1993 to go to Oklahoma University.

DBS: Why?

- KYA: We have cousins out there, and I heard that they have a good education program. I wanted to major in nursing at first, but I'm afraid of needles and blood, really, I'm scared of my own, so I'm going into education. I've always felt that was my calling, since I used to teach in the Sunday School at church. I like working with children at about the 4th grade, you know, the age of nine.
- DBS: Do you have any closing remarks about the developmental program.
- KYA: No. I think I've said enough.

APPENDIX J

CARL

DBS: What year did you graduate?

CARL: 1992.

DBS: Did you enroll at the University after high school graduation?

CARL: Yes.

DBS: How would you describe your high school preparation for college? Where would you rank yourself?

CARL: I'd rank myself in the top twenty.

DBS: Did you have different tracks in high school, like college preparatory or general curriculum?

CARL: Yes.

DBS: What curriculum were you assigned to?

CARL: I was on B track.

DBS: Were you at a public or private school?

CARL: Public school.

DBS: How would you rate your grades in high school?

CARL: Overall, I'd describe them as average. In my sophomore year I was transferred to Warren Easton, and I had really bad grades. When I went to Alcee Fortier they were really high, and when they averaged out I was average.

DBS: What were your expectations prior to enrolling at the University?

- CARL: I was expecting them to have my major, but they don't.
- DBS: What is your intended major?
- CARL: Tele-communications.
- DBS: What are your plans now?
- CARL: I'm not sure. I know that I also need to improve my learning skills. I was weak in a lot of skills that my high school hadn't taught.
- DBS: How did you feel when you found out you had to take some remedial classes?
- CARL: I felt happy because I knew it would help me in the future. Things that I'm learning now, well I didn't learn in high school. Now that I know, I could probably take the ACT and get a better score. I really like remedial courses, since I think they'll help me in the future.
- DBS: How did you feel about taking the placement tests?
- CARL: I didn't care.
- DBS: Why?
- CARL: I knew I had to take them, so I really didn't have a choice.
- DBS: How many classes were you assigned?
- CARL: 12 credits.
- DBS: Are you enrolled in reading, writing, and math?
- CARL: Yes, I take health also.
- DBS: If you had to evaluate the classroom environment, how would you describe it?

CARL: Everybody wants to learn, and they take time to teach you. They encourage you to do your best. They tell us how to be independent learners like Malcolm X. In high school they teach you and that's it. Here they give you a chance to make up. If you're doing really bad; they help you out; they talk to you. You can talk to them, and they ask you if you have any problems. So here, they give you a lot of chances at the University. It doesn't matter who I get. I am really not a person who says you should take her because she is the easiest. I am this way - whoever I get that's who I am going to learn from because we are both here for the same purposes. She is here to teach, and I am here to learn.

DBS: How do you define the role of the program?

CARL: It helps you to better yourself.

DBS: How do you feel about your high school experiences now?

CARL: I feel like if I hadn't clowned around a lot I would probably be in my regular classes. I thought college would be just like high school. I thought it would be an easy get away with no homework. All of those things catch up with you. I wish I had learned more and just paid attention. I thought I would take notes and listen to the teacher talk. All of those things catch up with you.

DBS: What do you like or dislike about the program?

CARL: I was used to being a D student, but here under 80 is an F. That makes you push yourself harder. Something I dislike is really hard to say since I really like the program.

DBS: If you had to identify one component or one

aspect of it, what would you identify as the one area you like best?

CARL: I like math. I learned a lot in math.

DBS: How many classes are you currently enrolled in?

CARL: Five (5) - Reading, writing, math, music, and orientation.

DBS: Are you going to exit any of your remedial classes this semester?

CARL: Oh yeah!

DBS: Which ones do you know for sure?

CARL: Writing, and I'll know more about reading after I take a make-up test in there. I need to catch up on my math, since I have four more chapters to do. I think I can do that in two weeks.

DBS: How did you feel about the testing situation when you came here?

CARL: I felt good about it. It gives you a second chance. My A.C.T. scores were low, so I looked at this as another chance. By scoring low on the A.C.T. I knew I was going to be placed in remedial classes anyway.

DBS: How did you feel about having a second chance?

CARL: I feel confident. I feel I can do it. My family has given me a lot of support. I know they are with me.

DBS: How did your family feel about your having to take the remedial classes?

CARL: They felt that I should take them anyway. After they saw the A.C.T. scores, I got in

high school; they really felt I would be in remedial too.

DBS: What was your ACT Score?

CARL: 14

DBS: Is there anything you'd like to say about the remedial program that I didn't ask?

CARL: No. That's it.

DBS: How do you feel about being in the remedial program?

CARL: I don't think they have enough people in there. Even if you don't think you need it, everyone should take the remedial courses. They will boost your grades, and they will help you down the line.

DBS: Do, you feel that more students should take the remedial class?

CARL: Yeah!

DBS: Have you decided to change your major?

CARL: No, I will probably transfer to UNO in a couple of years.

DBS: How do you feel about the name of the program?

CARL: What do you mean?

DBS: Do you refer to the program as remedial or developmental?

CARL: I've never really thought about it. I like it, and I don't care what you call it. Everybody knows that it's reading, writing and math.

DBS: I wish the best. Thank you for your time and this interview.

APPENDIX K

MRS. MORGAN

DBS: Biographical Background.

MRS. MORGAN: I am a product of Catholic Schools, small town in Alexandria, La., Xavier University for undergraduate as well as graduate degree. An undergraduate degree.

DBS: What do you have your degree, in specify?

MRS. MORGAN: Undergraduate Social Studies in English, Masters in Administration and Supervision.

DBS: What kind of preparation have you had in teaching reading?

MRS. MORGAN: I think the best preparation has been that I am a life long reader. I love to read; I love to gather information. I enjoy language.

DBS: Tell me something about your teaching experience what grades and subjects you have taught?

MRS. MORGAN: I started in 1954 teaching social studies for 6 years. I was away from the classroom for 3 years. On my return I was given an assignment to teach high school English. I returned to Joseph S. Clark to teach English. I taught English for the next 20 years. Three of those years I was at Benjamin Franklin, school for the academically gifted.

DBS: After having worked in an academic setting such as a school for the academically gifted, what motivated you

to seek employment at the University as an instructor in the remedial reading program?

MRS. MORGAN: I thought that my talents would be better served and that I could work better with young people who needed additional instruction that went beyond the given assignments and the collection of assignments because teaching kids who had problems was a greater challenge, a greater personal challenge for me.

DBS: Do you feel that anything in your past or training influenced your decision?

MRS. MORGAN: I would think about everything because if I remember the elementary school that I attended, well, it was a family environment kind of school. That was the same for high school. It was a small community, everybody knew each other, and there was a high level of parent participation and support.

DBS: Is this something that you felt was needed in a remedial program?

MRS. MORGAN: I think it is needed in order to participate. I wanted to bring that kind of background back to the remedial classroom.

DBS: How do you perceive the students enrolled in your class?

MRS. MORGAN: Well, I have a historical perspective as well. When I first came to the University, I think that the students were better prepared, even if the scores didn't reflect it. They had a better attitude towards learning and a

better attitude towards accepting the instruction. But anyway, they accepted directions. Students now seem to reject instruction; they are more interested in a quick fix. They seem to believe that the teachers are withholding the trick that would make it very easy, and I don't really believe that the students today are as well-prepared. And there are no good tricks.

DBS: What would you say contributed to their ideals as far as their coming in and rejecting instructions and thinking that there is a quick fix there?

MRS. MORGAN: I don't know if it is a greater television world that we live in or that their learning style is oriented towards dramatics. I can't put my finger on it. I don't know if the fact that there is more television and less reading, less language, less value placed on language.

DBS: What have you identified as being the greatest need for the students who are enrolled in your remedial class beyond remedial reading?

MRS. MORGAN: Language, language skills and appreciation for language, probably, if they could get over that hurdle that there is a need for language skills. When I say language, I mean being able to speak, process what they hear, write as well as they should.

DBS: How do some of them intend to utilize the skills that they have mastered in the remedial reading program?

MRS. MORGAN: They certainly plan to use them to do well in their college classes. But they, also seem to think that we are

- more of a roadblock than a help, but they really need to be in these classes. This is one of their frustrations. I think that they feel that we are wasting their time that if they were just given the opportunity to get into their regular classes that they would be able to handle it.
- DBS: Does the attitude change say somewhere in the semester where you are viewed not as a roadblock?
- MRS. MORGAN: In many instances they realize that their vocabularies are being enhanced; they're able to read larger blocks of information and get more from it.
- DBS: So, students see you as a roadblock and then what?
- MRS. MORGAN: A helper, a leader, someone to guide them in the right direction.
- DBS: How would you describe the environment of your classroom?
- MRS. MORGAN: Open, I tell them to feel welcome, at home. I would hope the environment is a warm, cordial atmosphere. I hope they would feel free to ask questions, to learn to speak to each other; you can under conditions other than authoritarian. There's no need for the authoritarian situation at this point.
- DBS: Why are you trying to give them an alternative approach versus an authoritarian?
- MRS. MORGAN: I think one of our goals is independent work. I would like them to realize that they are mature independent learners. I would like them to become less teacher dependent. As independent workers they can learn more in a shorter period of time.

- DBS: I've noticed that you incorporate a lot of African-American selections in your reading assignments. How does that impact the environment or your teaching?
- MRS. MORGAN: I would hope that would serve as motivational, that they would be able to identify with the writer, that they would find a common thrust, that they would understand where the writer was coming from, that they would understand the language, and to better be able to relate more closely to the authors and their experiences.
- DBS: How do they respond to the selections? Do they like them?
- MRS. MORGAN: In most instances. We're doing the Autobiography of Malcolm X right now, and after the first two or three chapters Malcolm does become redundant, he does have some repetition. There were places in Malcolm's life they had no interest in, which is reasonable. I told them that you read the chapter, that not every chapter is of equal importance. At least, you know what's going on, and how eventually he came to be whatever it was he is.
- DBS: What do you ultimately see yourself preparing the students for in this class?
- MRS. MORGAN: Hopefully for life. I tell them if you ever become interested, and curious about what goes on in the world you'll never know another day of boredom.
- DBS: How then would you define success or influence of your expectations?
- MRS. MORGAN: If they tell me that yes, they are readers, and that they are

participating citizens, well, that's my success. I really hope to influence them in that manner.

DBS: What about their success?

MRS. MORGAN: That they feel good about themselves.

DBS: Do you feel that students come in with a problem with their self-esteem due to their participation in the program?

MRS. MORGAN: I feel that self-esteem is closely connected with academic abilities and inabilities from where I see. They apologize for what they don't know, and I would like for them not to apologize, just to get on the horse and get cracking so that you'll know.

DBS: Do you see yourself as the facilitator for creating a situation where they will be receptive to one another?

MRS. MORGAN: I think so. I would hope so.

DBS: Is that something you perceive that is important to them in life or just classroom specific?

MRS. MORGAN: No. in life.

DBS: How do you feel about the remedial focus that we have here at the university?

MRS. MORGAN: Necessary, in order to help. I think we would lose a lot more students, if we didn't have the remedial classes. I am not sure that we are able to help even 50% but whatever number of students that we are able to help, I think we have a chance of moving on.

- DBS: How do you respond to the notion that remedial teachers burn out faster than others?
- MRS. MORGAN: Well, I think being here by choice that I knew what I was facing. I knew what I was coming into, and there are times when it can be very frustrating for me. But I realize that if I am doing my best and it is not my problem as much as it is their problem. So, I just try to revive and keep going and keep pushing them. Because I know my satisfaction will come from their good performance.
- DBS: Have you ever had a semester where you felt that you didn't accomplish much?
- MRS. MORGAN: All of them. I feel that I never accomplish what I am set out to do. I guess I have high ideas. I have to have that. The goals have to be high, and I do get very frustrated especially at the end of the semester when sometimes I'll see students drop along the wayside for reasons that are not academic. They either have to work or been messed up with the grant papers or something. That's generally speaking.
- DBS: Do you think that maybe some of their problems stem from their inability to read?
- MRS. MORGAN: Oh I think so. Yes, yes.
- DBS: Why did you set up an office in the back of the lab instead of somewhere private?
- MRS. MORGAN: We are there all day. We are there from early morning until the afternoon. And we are readily available to the students. So what we hope is that they would make greater use of our services.

APPENDIX L

MRS. DAY

DBS: Please give me a biographical sketch of your educational background/experiences.

MRS. DAY: I was an elementary teacher for many years, then I became a resource teacher. I attended an all girls' catholic school; the majority was all white. There were only 4 black girls in my classes. I went there two years. After that time my father became ill, and it was necessary that I leave. Later, I was offered a scholarship to Grambling State University, and after that I was offered a Danforth Scholarship to work on my graduate education. However, I didn't accept that scholarship.

DBS: What motivated you to seek employment as a reading instructor in the remedial program at the University?

MRS. DAY: I was awarded an experienced teaching fellowship to attend Loyola University where I finished getting my masters degree. Individuals who participated in this program were selected among 500 applicants. The program was geared at working with minorities. After completing that, I went back to Loyola and University of New Orleans (UNO) and completed 30 hours above the masters in special education with emphasis on mental retardation and learning disabilities. After that, I continued to work with the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at UNO in linguistics and further education in reading. At this point I decided that

I could utilize my training best by teaching remedial reading at the University.

DBS: How many years did you teach elementary school?

MRS. DAY: 7 years being a Resource Teacher.

DBS: What lead you to the University?

MRS. DAY: When I was a resource teacher, I had 2 tutors whom I would help on various things. Apparently, I was recommended by the 2 tutors to the Evening Division Director around that time. I then worked part-time for 1 year. After that experience, I then pursued a full-time position in the remedial program, and the rest is history. I observed that a lot of students were never taught or never learned the skills involved or need for reading.

DBS: What is the difference you find in developmental vs. remedial?

MRS. DAY: I observed that a lot of the students were never taught or never learned the skills involved in reading.

DBS: What influenced your teaching?

MRS. DAY: Since I was a former elementary teacher, as well as being trained in learning disabilities, I tried to work out specific steps that would help me to understand first and then develop some appropriate techniques or strategies to help these students learn to read.

DBS: What do you see to be the greatest need of the students?

MRS. DAY: Many of the students I have taught are the same individuals I have taught in elementary school, so there is a large number of them that I know personally from even kindergarten. In general, there is a similarity among most of the students who come here in that they share similar backgrounds, similar types of neighborhoods, and they share common experiences in that way. Their academic needs, for the most part, are great. They didn't totally master the skills at the time when it was presented to them in elementary school. I don't mean that they were not exposed, but, perhaps it was the way they were taught. They didn't receive enough practice or review or reinforcement or whatever it was to really become skilled in using certain strategies.

DBS: What are the students reactions when they see you in the reading classroom, since you are the one that they had in elementary?

MRS. DAY: Most of them will come and tell me because certainly you change a lot from elementary school to now, and many of these people are above 30 when they come here. They usually make the first contact because I don't. I will recognize the names very often because we had large families back then. But I don't recognize a specific individual if I haven't seen him or her in 12 years or so.

DBS: Does this help you in the classroom?

MRS. DAY: I think it is very, very helpful, the fact that they feel they know me, and in many other cases they will say after a week that I was speaking to my aunt or my mother, and they said they knew

me when I was teaching in the public school system. I find that very helpful.

DBS: How would you describe the classroom environment?

MRS. DAY: I find it differs from class to class. It seems that each class has it's own distinct personality which seems to make the difference in the climate, especially if you have one or two individuals who are interesting and outgoing and who will speak out. On the other hand, I've had some classes where everyone seems to be inhibited and don't really try. It doesn't seem that there is anything that I can do initially to make them open up. Therefore, I encourage those students to open up things for a class. They are very studious and have had experience in the military or in the work force.

DBS: What motivates you to choose some of your reading materials?

MRS. DAY: We used Maya Angelo's book for several semesters, and one semester we used it in particular because in reading the book the females were very interested in it, and the males were to a lesser extent. So, several of the males mentioned, well why can't we have something that was written about a male. So Mrs. Morgan and I discussed it this semester, and we decided that we should use the Autobiography of Malcolm X. It is our very first time using it; we have used Maya Angelo's book perhaps 15 times. I think another consideration was the fact that Spike Lee was making a movie about Malcolm X. All of the students mentioned they were familiar with it. And from semester to

semester, we will bring in other articles that are pertinent. When there was a conflict in Saudi Arabia, we brought in several of our newspaper articles, as well as our maps, from there. I try to select different readings so they will see that there are other things and get something from reading.

DBS: What are you ultimately preparing your students for in this class?

MRS. DAY: Well, really to do better in whatever they are doing. For instance, if they complete college or not, they will be better people just because they have learned to read better; they have learned to think more critically, and they have learned to get something out of reading. To learn how to seek information, to me, will make a difference whether or not the students get a B.S. degree or not. If I see a change in their attitude towards learning, in general, and a change in their thinking is success because from then on that person can truly do the rest by himself or herself without me.

DBS: What adjustments have you made in your assignments?

MRS. DAY: I assign different things with a study guide, when I know that it is a difficult chapter or boring chapter. I usually have them to use other references to look at different pages. I never schedule a test the day after a holiday because that would be frustrating for them. I keep in mind the holidays when I schedule tests or different lessons; I keep them very positive.

- DBS: How do you perceive your role in the classroom?
- MRS. DAY: I always see myself as the educator who is supposed to help people educationally. I really see this as my main focus because you see everyone has a mother and even if they are the nurturer, well, it is to help you do the academic work. And I don't really want to be the shoulder that students are coming to load their problems on because it would make me feel less objective about what I am supposed to do. Well, as one said the other day, and this is his second time in the class, I really have to say that you force people to do their best.
- DBS: Is that in an appreciative manner?
- MRS. DAY: Yes. Yes. He seemed to be very appreciative about it, but he did say, you really do force people to do their best in here.
- DBS: What about your expectations?
- MRS. DAY: I think I would have to go back to my particular educational background when I was in the catholic schools. There you had to do your utmost regardless of what the grading policy was; you had to learn all you possibly could learn. I feel that I have to go beyond what's expected to discover everybody's potential.
- DBS: Students who have to repeat the class, how do they adjust that second semester?
- MRS. DAY: It varies. The ones who have done the most seem to make a better adjustment. Many of those who repeat actually have not been here; they have not actually

been into the class long enough to know anything about it.

DBS: Are you saying that they are usually absent?

MRS. DAY: Absent or they never actually enter. In many cases they never actually entered; they never come once, or they come for the test. For them its like a new experience all the way.

VITA

Deborah Burson Smith, born in Memphis, Tennessee, is the second of nine children. She was educated in the Memphis City Public Schools and was a 1966 graduate of Hamilton High School.

She holds a B.A. degree in English Education from LeMoyne-Owen College (1970) in Memphis, Tennessee and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction with reading specialist certification from the University of New Orleans (1980).

She began her professional career as an English teacher (10th and 11th grades) at Whitestation High School in Memphis, Tennessee. She later accepted a position in New Orleans, Louisiana as an English teacher (7th, 8th, and 9th grades) at Andrew J. Bell Junior High School and Livingston Middle School where she assumed the position of administrative consultant and curriculum coordinator for the Secondary Curriculum Improvement Program (SCIP). In 1981, she became director of a federally funded program, Student Support Services, at Southern University at New Orleans and served in that capacity until 1984 when she was appointed director of Developmental Studies at

the same University. After having served as director of this program for six years, she was appointed to her present position as coordinator of the Southern University at New Orleans and the New Orleans Public Schools Partnership in the College of Education.

She has made numerous presentations at national, regional, state and local conferences and workshops. In 1992, she served as an educational consultant for the Atlanta Project (TAP) which was sponsored by Carnegie Institute and former President Jimmy Carter.

She has received numerous honors and awards including Outstanding Developmental Educator (1985), Outstanding Young Woman of America (1985), Who's Who in American Education (1989-90) and Y.W.C.A. Role Model (1993).

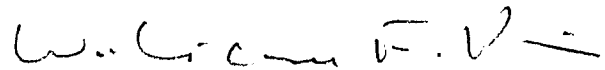
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Deborah Burson Smith


Major Field: Education

Title of Dissertation: African American Students' Perception of Mandatory Participation in a Remedial Program at an Historically Black University in the South

Approved:

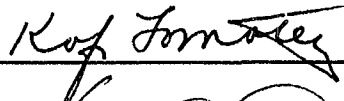


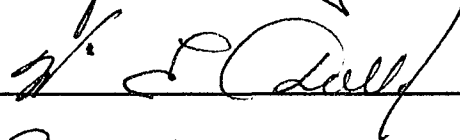
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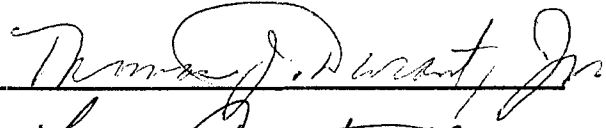
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:











Date of Examination:

October 28, 1993